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*The Story of the Stately Homes of England—
their History, their Ghosts, Witches, Highwaymen,
Mermaids, and other Strange Connexions*

BY

MARGARET M. PEARSON

AUTHOR OF

“LONDON ADVENTURE” ETC.

*With eight plates in half-tone
and nine maps and plans*



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FOR
NORAH AND MIMI
WITH LOVE

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Preface

THIS is a book about the personalities behind some of the homes of England.

England's own story is a closely interlocked jigsaw—so closely interlocked that half the fun of discovering the story of one house is lost if each one is regarded as an isolated home, set in lovely grounds, perhaps, but with no connexion with England's own greater and more colourful story.

The kings, statesmen, and schemers whom many of the houses have known are not just "something to do with history." They and their womenfolk, their homes, their castles, and the legends (accepted or otherwise) that have grown up around them are the actual architects of this second Elizabethan Age. Nothing is isolated, either in time or place. The past and the present are interlocked in every direction. There is a family link between Sir Francis Drake and Sir Winston Churchill. There is a link between a desperate king in flight and a new housing project at Darlaston; between the minstrels at old Tutbury Castle and the Olympic Horse Trials at Badminton; between Lady Godiva and the Earl Marshal.

And as this is England, where legends and tradition flavour the very air, no home, let alone one of the 'stately' ones, can be regarded as separate from its surroundings. Mermaids, smugglers, highwaymen, witches—their existence, or the belief that gave them existence, has coloured the land on which the homes stand and influenced the lives of the people they sheltered just as surely as religious persecution affected domestic architecture, and just as surely as Royalist sympathies brought destruction to so many of the loveliest of the old 'stately homes.'

Everything has its roots in centuries long past. The wood used for the making of the staffs carried by the Gold Staff Officers in Westminster Abbey at the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II was grown at Arundel, and there was a castle *there* in the time of Alfred the Great.

LONDON, 1955

MARGARET MARY PEARSON

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I

Villainy and Witchcraft

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

SIR EDWARD COKE, of STOKE POGES, irascible, overbearing, great man, and villain, and his second wife, the self-styled

LADY HATTON, who were famous for their unending matrimonial strife. Their daughter

FRANCES, and the daughter's hated husband,

SIR JOHN VILLIERS (afterwards Viscount Purbeck), elder brother of

GEORGE VILLIERS, first Duke of Buckingham, the great favourite of King James I and King Charles I. His assassin,

JOHN FELTON, who murdered the Duke in Portsmouth. As the Duke fell, dying, his wife ran to his aid. She was formerly

LADY KATHERINE MANNERS, the one-time bewitched daughter of the Earl and Countess of Rutland, of BELVOIR CASTLE.* Lady Katherine had been bewitched as a child by

JOAN FLOWER, the Leicestershire witch, and her two daughters,

MARGARET AND PHILIPPA FLOWER. Between them they bewitched not only the little Lady Katherine, but her two brothers and her parents. The trial of the Flowers was one of the most sensational in English legal history. The murdered Duke of Buckingham was succeeded by his small son,

GEORGE VILLIERS, second Duke of Buckingham. He was adopted by Charles I, and brought up at Court with his own sons. After a life of adventure and licentious escapades (studded with duels, brawls, and flashes of genuine ability) Buckingham died at KIRBY MOORSIDE while on his way to his home at HELMSLEY. His younger brother,

FRANCIS VILLIERS, had been killed in a Civil War skirmish at Kingston long before.

MARY FAIRFAX, of Nun Appleton, Yorkshire, became George's unappreciated and neglected wife. George Villiers' most famous duel was the one in which he killed

LORD SHREWSBURY, whose wife, formerly

ANNA MARIA BRUDENELL, had for a long time been George's tigerish and dangerous mistress. Legend says that Anna Maria held George's horse during the duel, and that afterwards they fled together to CLIVEDEN.*

* Throughout the book the asterisk denotes houses that are open to the public.

After Anna Maria and Buckingham has been parted (by order of the court) she married one of the Brydges family of AVINGTON, near Winchester. A famous guest at the manor during Anna Maria's time was

NELL GWYNN, Charles II's cheerful, knockabout mistress.

By some strange twist of fate Anna Maria's own son

JACK TALBOT (a legitimate one) was himself slain in a duel by

HENRY FITZ ROY, Duke of Grafton, one of Charles II's illegitimate sons by

BARBARA CASTLEMAINE, the King's most notorious mistress. She was the mother of at least four of his children, and possibly six. She herself was a Villiers, cousin of the second Duke of Buckingham, and, like all the family, handsome, rapacious, clever, and utterly ruthless.

The second Duke of Buckingham's next-of-kin was

JAMES DOUGLAS, Earl of Arran (who later became the Duke of Hamilton).

He had an illegitimate son by Barbara Castlemaine's youngest daughter,

LADY BARBARA FITZROY, who was possibly Charles II's daughter, possibly John Churchill's. If she was the daughter of the future Duke of Marlborough she provides a link between Buckingham, Castlemaine, Charles, and all the rest, with Blenheim Palace and the ancestors of Sir Winston Churchill. Young James Douglas, who seems (in spite of his indiscretion with Lady Barbara Fitzroy) to have been a pleasant and inoffensive person, was killed in a famous duel in Hyde Park by

LORD MOHUN, a bad man from BOCONNOC, in Cornwall. As he slew the Duke, the Duke slew him.

Edgar Holloway.



I

THE first story concerns a king's favourite and his 'bewitched' wife, his nit-witted brother, and their entanglements with the runaway daughter of a fire-eating judge. It is a story of murder, of a boy's fight against half a dozen swords in the sunset, of a licentious rake and his wild and dissipated mistress. It is a black tapestry of a story, of greed and fury, of witchcraft, of bribed courts, of tears and splendour, and of two of the most famous duels in English history.

It is, in fact, a slice of life in high places under the Stuarts.

The focal point at the beginning of it all is STOKES POGES.

Stoke Poges to-day is a place of pilgrimage, for in Stoke Poges churchyard, where he wrote his *Elegy*, lies Thomas Gray, and not far away, in the grounds of Stoke Poges manor, stands the monument erected in his memory by John Penn, grandson of William Penn,¹ the founder of Pennsylvania. John's father, Thomas, William's second son, bought the estate in 1760, but Stoke Poges manor had been associated with famous people for many generations before that. At least two members of royalty stayed there. Queen Elizabeth was the guest of Sir Edward Coke, who loaded her with jewels and other gifts to the value of a thousand pounds or more—a gratifying visit to one who loved possessions. Forty-odd years later Charles I stayed there in very different circumstances—as a Roundhead prisoner.

Stoke Poges manor belonged for many years, from about 1600 to 1634, to Sir Edward Coke, the fiery, unscrupulous, and altogether remarkable judge—the first judge in England to be called Lord Chief Justice. Sir Edward conducted the trial of Essex in 1600, of Sir Walter Raleigh in 1603, and of the Gunpowder Plotters in 1605. When evidence against accused who appeared before him seemed too thin to secure a conviction Sir Edward entered the lists on behalf of the prosecution, and stormed, bullied, and shouted abuse. Against Raleigh he cried, "Thou hast a Spanish heart . . . there never lived a viler viper upon the face of the earth than thou"

¹ See Chapter III, under Arundel Castle.

—but he was a great common lawyer, and upheld the Common Law (at a time when it was by no means politic, and usually dangerous, to oppose the nobility) against the Church, the Admiralty, the Star Chamber, and even against Royal Prerogative (so dearly loved by James I). As far as knowledge of Common Law goes, he was a very great man. In other respects he was often nothing less than a thoroughgoing villain.

By all accounts Sir Edward's first marriage was peaceful enough. He won a dowry of £30,000 with the bride, Bridget Paston, of Huntingfield, in Suffolk, and when she died sixteen years later he had not only increased his wealth, but had seven sons and three daughters as well.

It was his second marriage that he lived to regret so bitterly—and so, indeed, did his second wife. It was the plague of both their lives.

Sir Edward was a hard-working, remarkably able man, and his rapid rise had been forced along by the powerful help of the great William Cecil, Lord Burghley. A few months after his first wife died Sir Edward married Lord Burghley's granddaughter, widow of Sir William Newport, the nephew of Queen Elizabeth's "dancing Chancellor." The lady, however—a lady of forceful character—called herself Lady Hatton, and was never known as Lady Coke. She also had a large fortune, and she was being wooed by Sir Edward's arch-rival in all things, Sir Francis Bacon. Sir Edward had once beaten Bacon for the position of Attorney-General. Now he beat him to the altar with Lady Hatton, and he must have cursed himself for his triumph till the end of time!

The marriage even began ominously. They were married privately, without banns or licence, an irregular business altogether (as well Sir Edward must have known), and they were promptly prosecuted in the Archbishop's Court.

Lady Hatton was a woman of both character and wealth; her husband was a man of character and wealth—and unceasing ambition—and from the very beginning of their married life they quarrelled famously and unendingly. She left him in the end, after his inevitable fall from favour, "retiring herself into obscure places, both in town and country."

But much was to happen at Stoke Poges before that.

After constant quarrels with James I regarding his irregular practice of consulting judges privately about current cases (as publicly they merely echoed Sir Edward) Coke overreached himself in his efforts to secure the conviction of the Earl and Countess

of Somerset¹ for the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury. He was forced to retire from the case. He came under a serious cloud, and, possibly to court influential friends, he proposed to betroth Lady Hatton's fourteen-year-old daughter, Frances, to Sir John Villiers (later created Viscount Purbeck), the subnormal elder brother of the first Duke of Buckingham.

Francis Bacon, who enjoyed opposing Sir Edward in all things (and, anyway, loved intrigue), encouraged Lady Hatton and the girl in their resentment against the proposed marriage. Frances Coke had a horror of the poor young man, though, to give him his due, Sir John Villiers was in love with her. One midnight Lady Hatton and Frances fled from the house in a waiting coach and took refuge with a relative in Oatlands, near Weybridge. Sir Edward, furious at this disobedience, discovered where mother and daughter were hiding, rode after them with twelve armed men, and took the house by assault and battery. He returned home raging but triumphant, had his wife imprisoned for a spell, and locked his daughter up in Stoke Poges manor. He tied the girl to the bedpost, whipped her into submission, and forced her to consent to the wedding. The ceremony took place at Hampton Court, the King himself giving the unwilling little bride away. But, even if the bride was unhappy, James, Sir Edward, and the Villiers family were delighted. The Villiers were a poor family, and Frances a very rich heiress.

The Duke of Buckingham, who knew a good deal about witches from his wife's experience of bewitchment, consulted Archbishop Laud about the advisability of invoking the black arts to cure his brother of lack of wits. But Laud was sceptical about the genuineness of even 'confessed' witches, and, whether Buckingham did or did not consult any witches privately, the condition of Viscount Purbeck (as he now was) did not improve with matrimony, and off and on he had to be placed under restraint. At the first opportunity Buckingham took over his sister-in-law's property under the pretence of managing it, but spent thousands of her money on his own ploys while giving her a starvation allowance. Poor Frances, forced into marriage with a man she hated, ran away with Sir Robert Howard, fifth son of the Earl of Suffolk, after having borne a son of doubtful paternity. Buckingham had the girl arraigned before the spiritual courts for bewitching her husband and for attempting to bewitch him. She and her lover, Sir Robert, were condemned to excommunication and imprisonment, but

¹ See Chapter VI.

public disgust at their treatment forced James to reprieve them. But James died, and Buckingham again had the girl brought up for trial. Frances demanded that Purbeck should give evidence for her, but Buckingham, knowing his love for her, and how tenderly he had nursed her through smallpox, refused to have him called. Frances was found guilty of adultery, heavily fined, and sentenced to walk barefoot through the City. But Frances, still as determined as she was when she fled from the thought of marriage with John Villiers, escaped Buckingham's clutches. His henchmen, watching for her, saw a slim figure slip out of the Strand Palace of the Duke of Savoy and enter a coach. They gave chase. Meanwhile Frances, disguised as a page-boy, slipped out of another door and escaped in another coach. In the first coach was a page-boy disguised as Frances. Frances escaped to Shropshire, and later to France.

Although the Duke of Buckingham brought up the charge of witchcraft against the unhappy young Frances, he himself was seriously supposed to have dabbled in witchcraft and the black arts under the notorious Dr Lambe of Worcestershire—a sorcerer so hated and feared in London that he could venture out only in disguise. But one night he was recognized, dragged to St Paul's Cross, and stoned to death. Buckingham's association with Lambe was one more reason for the bitter hatred that was surging round the Duke about this time (1628), and his murder in Portsmouth by John Felton was really most timely. It saved him the disgrace of impeachment. The Commons had already taken the offensive against him as an evil counsellor of the King, and had he not been murdered he would have faced a charge of high treason. Before he set off for Portsmouth, to join the fleet for the relief of Rochelle, placards had appeared on walls in London: "Who rules the kingdom? The King. Who rules the King? The Duke. Who rules the Duke? The Devil."

But Buckingham rode off full of self-esteem and confidence, though the story was going about that three times the ghost of his father had appeared to an officer of the King's wardrobe at Southwick, near Portsmouth, where the King was staying, urging him to warn Buckingham that unless he appeased the hatred of the people his days were numbered.

No ghostly warning should have been necessary. There had been signs and enough, but Buckingham was in high spirits when he rose on the fateful morning. But as he walked to his carriage he turned his head to catch something one of his officers whispered

to him—and in that unguarded moment a knife was plunged into his heart.

“Villain!” he cried with his last breath.

The Duchess of Buckingham, heavy with child, ran to him, but he was already dead. Officers rushed into the confusion, shouting, “Where is the villain?” And John Felton, who had made no attempt to escape, stepped forward calmly and said, “I am the man. Here I am.”

Felton had been a lieutenant in the Army, and probably had a personal grudge against the Duke, as he was owed back pay and had looked on bitterly as others were promoted over his head. But he sincerely believed that by ridding the country of the Duke he would be doing it a service, and certainly he had a triumphal journey through London to the Tower. He was showered with blessings by people who shared his opinion of the royal favourite—but he was hanged just the same (at Tyburn), covered in tar, and gibbeted at Portsmouth, where he had committed the crime.

The Duchess of Buckingham who ran to the murdered man was Lady Katherine Manners, one of the children of Francis, sixth Earl of Rutland, said to have been bewitched in 1617 by Joan Flower, the Leicestershire witch, and her daughters Margaret and Philippa.

The trial of the Flower witches is one of the most sensational in English history.

Joan Flower and her daughters were employed by the Earl and Countess of Rutland in the family home of BELVOIR CASTLE,* in Leicestershire. For some unknown reason Margaret was dismissed, and the mother planned a horrible revenge. Margaret stole a glove belonging to the Earl’s heir, Henry, and gave it to her mother, who stroked her wretched “familiar,” Rutterkin, with it, dipped it in boiling water, pricked it, and buried it. The small boy fell ill and died. They bewitched the other two children, Francis and Katherine, by a spell involving hairs, giving Francis “torments” and Katherine a serious illness. With the aid of three other witches the three Flowers cast a spell (the ingredients this time were another glove and feathers from their feather-bed boiled in water and blood) on the Earl and Countess to prevent their having further children.

The trial of the Leicestershire witches was made even more sensational by the behaviour of Joan Flower. After her arrest she called for bread and butter, wishing “it might never go through

her if she were guilty." No sooner had she uttered this rash wish than the bread choked her, and she fell down dead.

Margaret and Philippa confessed their share of the crimes, and were executed at Lincoln in 1618.

With this "proven" story of witchcraft surrounding his wife's childhood, it is not surprising that Buckingham should wonder whether black magic might not help his brother John. It certainly did not help Buckingham himself. It was one of many practices that influenced the whole country against him.

He was only thirty-five when he died, on that morning when he felt so gay, in August 1628.

The house where he was murdered is still standing in High Street, Old Portsmouth, marked by a plaque.

Two small children survived the Duke—Mary, aged six, and George, the second Duke of Buckingham, then under a year old. Another son, Charles, had died in infancy the previous year. A few months later Francis, the son he never saw, was born. Mary who had been betrothed at the age of four to Charles, Lord Herbert, went to live with his family. She was married at twelve, widowed at thirteen. The two sons, George and Francis, were taken to Court, adopted by Charles I, and brought up with his sons.

George Villiers, the second Duke of Buckingham, grew up at Court with all the accomplishments and vices of a courtier of the time. He was cultured, talented, amusing, reckless, licentious—the worst rake of his age. He was completely without morals or more than a perfunctory loyalty to his friends; at times he was a roistering bully.

In 1648, when Charles I was still a prisoner in Carisbrooke Castle, on the Isle of Wight, George Villiers and his younger brother helped to raise a troop of soldiers, and took part in a battle near Kingston, after Lord Holland's abortive attempt to rouse London for the King. Before setting out Francis took a tender farewell of his mistress, Mary Kirke, giving her a present of plate valued at £1000, and she gave him a lock of her hair sewn into a ribbon to wear about his neck. The brothers and their men were routed by Parliamentary troops. George cut his way out of the mêlée and escaped, but Francis, his horse killed under him, put his back against a tree and single-handed fought the Round-heads till sunset. With his strength ebbing away with fatigue, Francis was struck down from behind the tree, and staggered

forward on to the swords of half a dozen of the enemy. He was still not twenty.

His body, with the ribbon and his lover's lock of hair about his neck, was rowed down the Thames from Kingston to York House, and carried up through the Watergate which Inigo Jones had built for his father. He was buried in Henry VII's Chapel in Westminster Abbey.

The Watergate stands to-day at the foot of Buckingham Street, off the Strand, in London.

George Villiers escaped to France and joined the exiled Charles's Court-in-adversity. He was two years older than his young King, the slim, dark young King who had grown to manhood in his escape from Worcester¹—the same young King whose mother had trained him to "a wonderful civility." When Charles came back to the throne George Villiers had his vast estates returned to him, and six years later, in 1666, he began building the first of three mansions which have stood on the same site at CLIVEDEN, Buckinghamshire.)

Two years later the Duke eloped with Anna Maria Brudenell, Countess of Shrewsbury, who had been his mistress for some time. He was, like his mistress, already married, for on his return to England he had courted Mary Fairfax,² daughter of Sir Thomas and Lady Fairfax of Nun Appleton, Yorkshire. Fairfax had been for a time commander-in-chief of Cromwell's army, but he revolted against the death sentence passed on Charles I. Besides, his wife was a staunch Royalist, and he resigned his command and retired to his Yorkshire estates. At the first hint of a Restoration Fairfax forgot his gout, rekindled the spark of action in his eye, and raised his tenants to support General Monck.

His daughter Mary had been tutored by the poet Andrew Marvell. She married Buckingham, but she must have regretted her choice as bitterly as Lady Hatton regretted her marriage to Sir Edward Coke. Buckingham became enslaved by the Countess of Shrewsbury, a handsome and already notorious young woman in her twenties. Their association was quite public and completely scandalous.

Buckingham and the Earl of Shrewsbury had both officiated at the Coronation of Charles II, Buckingham, in a magnificent costume reputed to have cost a fortune, carrying the Orb, Shrewsbury carrying the Sword.

¹ See Chapter VII.

² See Chapter V, under Helmsley Castle.

Seven years later the two men met for the last time, in a field at Barn Elms (now Roehampton), when Shrewsbury was killed.

Anna Maria Brudenell,¹ Countess of Shrewsbury, was Buckingham's evil genius. Wherever she went scandal, quarrels, and duelling followed. She was notorious for the number of her admirers, and during the first few months of their association Buckingham was involved in brawls and challenges with five different people, and imprisoned three times in the Tower for riotous behaviour.

Buckingham, of course, had other interests besides Anna Maria. He was a little in love with "Minette" (Henrietta),² the King's dearly loved young sister and Duchess of Orleans, and he dallied with Frances Stuart,³ the silly, beautiful creature who enslaved Charles and gambled heavily with her virtue. Eventually, gossip said, she exchanged it in return for the promise to be the first to ride in the magnificent new carriage which King Louis XIV had sent to Charles. It had plate-glass windows, and was the first of its kind in England. Frances Stuart and Barbara Castlemaine both plagued the King to be given the first ride. He was torn between his fear of Barbara's temper and his infatuation for Frances, who so far had kept him at arm's length. Barbara, who was pregnant again, declared she would have a miscarriage if she were not allowed the first ride. Frances retaliated by saying, "Unless I ride first I shall never be in a condition to make that action possible."

So this time the silly Frances managed to outwit the far wiler Castlemaine. Frances, riding in the new glass carriage in Hyde Park, was the envy of every woman. She no doubt felt she had made a very satisfactory bargain.

By this time the Duke's *affaire* with the Countess of Shrewsbury was known to all London. Her reputation was no better than his, and the Duke himself said of her, "Such a woman was made to punish man, and the Devil to punish such a woman."

But in the end it was the Duke who was punished most.

His wife was ignored and humiliated, and Shrewsbury nothing but "a poor cuckold." Anna Maria even took him visiting with her to make her association with Buckingham "respectable." But, following their elopement in 1668, Shrewsbury was forced into issuing a challenge to the Duke.

They met on a raw January morning, each supported by two seconds, Shrewsbury's being Bernard Howard and Sir John Talbot, Buckingham's being Mr Jenkins and Sir Robert Holmes.

¹ See Chapter IV, under Rushbrooke Hall.

² See Chapter IX.

³ See Chapter VI, under Euston.

They all engaged simultaneously.

Jenkins was killed by Howard.

Talbot was wounded by Holmes.

Buckingham was wounded, but his blade pierced Shrewsbury's breast. He was gravely hurt, and was carried to a waiting coach by Talbot and Howard. Buckingham was helped to a house near by, and both of them made haste to apply to the King for a pardon for wounding and killing. The pardon was granted, which was particularly satisfactory for Buckingham, for Shrewsbury died of his wounds two months later.

Legend says that Lady Shrewsbury attended the duel dressed as a page, and held Buckingham's horse during the fight, and that he spent the night with her at Cliveden in his shirt bespattered with her husband's blood.

Anna Maria pretended to be heartbroken at her husband's death. Her ironic but still enslaved lover said, "'Twas her husband grieved whilst he was living; 'tis reasonable she should do it now he's dead." He added, "Her sadness became her so well that it bred delight in everybody else."

Not quite everybody else. The people were growing restive and critical, and Anna Maria's reputation was not improved when she sent a gang of footpads to murder her erstwhile lover, Henry Killigrew. Killigrew and Buckingham had had a brawl at the theatre. Killigrew, seeing himself supplanted with Anna Maria, abused Buckingham from a box. Buckingham retaliated by chasing him at sword-point across the theatre and dislodging his periwig. Killigrew was imprisoned, and after being forced to make an apology to Buckingham and his mistress he left for a brief exile in France. Now he returned to his old haunts, and enlivened the proceedings by saying what was true enough, that Anna Maria was any man's for the asking. Anna Maria sent her gang of cut-throats after him when he was on his way home to his house at Turnham Green. They left him for dead after killing his servant. Anna Maria sat near by in her coach to see that the job was efficiently carried out.

After these amusements Buckingham thought it wise to restore himself to popularity by purchasing a respectable position, and he expended £20,000 on the project, buying the Mastership of the Horse, then the most important of all offices at Court. Through all his misdemeanours he always had a modicum of popularity to come and go on, because of his wit at the expense of the unpopular Prince James, Duke of York (afterwards James II).

But Buckingham's star was on the wane.

He was accused of being implicated in Captain Blood's attempt to murder Buckingham's old enemy, the Duke of Ormonde, near Piccadilly; he was arraigned before the House of Lords on a charge brought by the fifteen-year-old Earl of Shrewsbury for the murder of his father and the "public debauchery" of his mother. He was compelled to swear not to live with Anna Maria again, and they finally parted after an association that brought little but disaster to Buckingham.

Two years later Anna Maria found some one else willing to marry her—Rodney Brydges—and she went to live at the manor of AVINGTON, where Charles II frequently visited her. His mistress, Nell Gwynn,¹ stayed there at one time, too, when Charles was visiting Winchester, where he was intending to build a palace. He had taken Nell with him for company, but he struck trouble in finding her accommodation. He instructed Bishop Ken, then chaplain to the King, to give up his prebendal house as a lodging for Nell. Ken remonstrated, but (according to a Winchester tradition) Nell moved in, and could be persuaded to move out only after part of the roof had been removed! She stayed then at Avington Manor, and had a fine time with Charles, hunting with him in the New Forest and fishing with him in the waters of the Itchen.

Anna Maria had another link with Charles II. Her second son, Jack Talbot, was killed in a duel by his second son by Barbara Castlemaine, Henry Fitz Roy,² Duke of Grafton. Young Henry felt called upon to defend his mother's good name, which Jack Talbot had besmirched. Her good name was in constant need of defence, and shortly afterwards Henry also fought, and also killed, Mr Stanley, brother of the ninth Earl of Derby, for the same excellent reason.

Disaster followed disaster for Buckingham. He lost his Mastership of the Horse (which went to Monmouth), and, separated from both wife and mistress, went downhill with the same gusto that characterized his whole life. He began drinking heavily and consorting with street-women. He was soon "worn to a thread by whoring." His one success was to win a libel case against Captain Blood. His last public appearance was at the Coronation of James II, and he then retired to Yorkshire, where he died a miserable death. When he was out hunting his horse dropped

¹ See Chapter VI, under Knole.

² See Chapters II (under Euston) and IX.

dead under him. It was an ill-omen for a superstitious man. While waiting for another mount he sat down on wet grass. He caught a chill, which developed so swiftly that he was unable to reach his home at HELMSLEY. Instead his followers took him to a tenant's home at KIRBY MOORSIDE, and there he died, in acute discomfort, in 1687.

To have lived fifty-nine years in the seventeenth century was quite a triumph. To have lived nearly fifty-nine years in whole-hearted vice and enjoyment was nothing short of miraculous. There is some doubt as to whether he sleeps peacefully, for stories are told in Yorkshire of the Duke hunting a spirit fox at midnight with a spirit pack of hounds—and there was once a song about it all so “despert blasphemous” that “no one dared sing it unless he be already damned.”

Buckingham's one child (which was by Anna Maria, not by his wife) had died when only five months old, so on Buckingham's death in his tenant's house at Kirby Moorside, James Douglas, Earl of Arran, his second cousin and next-of-kin, was sent for. James Douglas, later the Duke of Hamilton, although married, had an illegitimate son by Lady Barbara Fitzroy, youngest daughter of Barbara Castlemaine. Charles, ever polite, acknowledged her as his daughter in public, and allowed her to be styled “Fitzroy,” but as she was born during the high favouritism of John Churchill¹ (a second cousin of the Castlemaines), there is every likelihood that John, the future Duke of Marlborough, was her father.

Be that as it may, young Lady Barbara (still in her teens) bore a son by Buckingham's heir, James Douglas. She retired to the nunnery of Hôtel Dieu at Pontoise, and later became its prioress. The boy, Charles Hamilton,² was brought up by his grandmother, the notorious Barbara, and later achieved some distinction as a historian.

But long before that his father, the Duke of Hamilton, had come to an untimely end in Hyde Park.

Lord Mohun, a bad man from BOCONNOC, in Cornwall, had long been notorious for his evil ways; he had been implicated in the murder by his friend Captain Hall of an actor, William Mountfort, whose mistress Hall desired for himself. They first attacked the lady, Mrs Bracegirdle, in Drury Lane, but she declined to be kidnapped, and she and her mother together created such an uproar that Mohun and Hall had to let her escape. But

¹ See Chapter VIII.

² See Chapter VI, under Walpole House.

they followed her home, paraded up and down outside the house with drawn swords, and drank bottles of wine to keep themselves amused. When William Mountfort arrived, he was killed in cold blood by Hall, who escaped wearing Mohun's cloak as a disguise. It was obviously a well-thought-out plan, but Mohun was acquitted on the charge of being an accessory to the murder.

Some years later Mohun was involved in another fight. This time it was fatal. He killed the Duke of Hamilton in a duel in Hyde Park, and the Duke of Hamilton killed him.

Dean Swift, in a letter, said:

The dog Mohun was killed on the spot, but while the Duke was over him, Mohun shortened his sword, and stabbed him in the shoulder to the heart. The Duke . . . died on the grass, before he could reach his house, and was brought home in his coach by eight, while the poor Duchess was asleep. . . . Mohun gave the affront, and yet sent the challenge. I am infinitely concerned for the poor Duke, who was a frank, honest, and good-natured man. They carried the poor Duchess to a lodging in the neighbourhood, where I have been with her two hours, and am just come away. I never saw so melancholy a scene. . . . She has moved my very soul.

The estate of Boconnoc, near Lostwithiel, had changed hands many times. Various owners were beheaded and the property attainted, and the manor finally came into the possession of the Mohun family, descendants of the William de Mohun who had come to England with the Conqueror. In the grounds once stood an oak to which King Charles's standard is said to have been fixed during one period of the Civil War. One day, when the King was receiving the sacrament underneath the tree, some one tried to assassinate him. Ever after that (according to local tradition) the tree produced variegated leaves, having evidently changed colour from shock at witnessing the event!

Some time after Lord Mohun and the Duke of Hamilton had killed each other in Hyde Park in 1712 the property was sold to Thomas Pitt, Governor of Madras, who gained fame for bringing the magnificent 136 $\frac{1}{2}$ -carat Pitt diamond to England. He sold it for £135,000 to the Regent of France, and it was placed in the French Crown.

A duel ended the life of another owner of Boconnoc. From the Thomas Pitt of Pitt diamond fame the estates descended to another Thomas Pitt, later created Lord Camelford, Baron of Boconnoc. His son, the second Lord Camelford, was killed in London in a duel following a coffee-shop argument with a former friend,

Captain Best. Camelford, who had journeyed round the world with Captain Vancouver, died a lingering but self-composed death, methodically setting his affairs in order and forgiving Captain Best his too accurate aim.

The present seat of the Coke family is HOLKHAM HALL,* in Norfolk, a property which embodies one of the great agricultural romances of England, for through the knowledge and skill and hard work of young Thomas Coke the bleak, unproductive land was turned into valuable farming property.

Holkham Hall is open to the public on one day a week throughout July and August.

The Cokes are said to have acquired the property through a somewhat sharp practice by Sir Edward himself. He had a passion for acquiring property. He had inherited only two manors from his father, but by the time he died he owned sixty or more in Norfolk and Suffolk alone. And no doubt it was this natural acquisitiveness that made him insert a little unappreciated clause in his son John's marriage settlement. Through this clause Holkham Hall could not be inherited by any daughter John might have, but must be inherited by the male Coke line. John's only son died before he did, and because of this clause Holkham did not go to any of John's seven daughters, but to his brother Henry.

The first famous Coke at Holkham Hall was Thomas William Coke, the agriculturist, who succeeded to the estates in 1776, when he was twenty-four. Like most young men of his time, he finished his education with a 'grand tour' of the Continent, returning to England after many adventures, which included "falling in love with the Pretender's Queen." He was one of the boldest riders and best shots in England, but his fame rests on far more solid ground than that.

When Thomas William took over his Holkham Hall estate the property was so poor that he declared that "two rabbits would fight for but one blade of grass." Rye was the only grain that would grow—and precious little of that.

Young Coke tackled his problem with great energy and enthusiasm. To stop the land blowing away he first of all planted conifers, and then had the marl, clay, and chalk subsoil dug up and put on top of the sandy soil. He planted turnips, and then clover, to improve the fertility of the poor soil, feeding the turnips to the underfed sheep. To improve the quality of his grass he inspected

other properties, collecting specimens of suitable types. Then he gave botany lessons to his employees' children, and sent them scouring the countryside to collect the seeds he wanted. He reclaimed 700 acres from the sea. He improved Suffolk pigs by crossing them with Neapolitans, bred Southdown sheep and Devon cattle, grew enough timber to build his own carts and out-houses, and put all his profits back into the land.

In 1778, when he was twenty-six, Thomas William Coke inaugurated his famous sheep "shearings." Farmers were invited to inspect his new methods and to see for themselves the dividends they paid in increased production. He showed his visitors new methods of tillage, lent implements to those who could not afford to buy them, answered questions on every conceivable farming subject with the utmost good humour, and gave every one a homely and hearty farm dinner. Year after year these "shearings" were held—the forerunners of the modern agricultural shows. Each year more and more squires, farmers, and craftsmen attended, even coming from the Continent, as well as from all parts of England. By 1821, when the last "shearing" was held, some seven thousand people attended, and Coke rode genially about among them all, in his long white coat, sharing his knowledge with anyone who asked his advice.

Thomas Coke was eventually persuaded to become the Earl of Leicester—an honour he had previously refused six times. He lived to be ninety, and as long as he lived he kept open house to anyone interested in farming.

Holkham Hall is a huge building of light-coloured brick, magnificently set off by a handsome formal garden. The ceilings in many of the rooms are of curious gilt fret and mosaic, and there are three remarkable sculptured marble chimney-pieces, carved with a sow, pigs, and a wolf, with a bear and beehives, and with pelicans.

The present Earl and Countess of Leicester have three daughters—Lady Anne, who was one of the maids-of-honour at the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, Lady Carey, and Lady Sarah. The Earl has been Extra Equerry to the Queen since her succession, and before that was Extra Equerry to King George VI.

Since Holkham Hall has been open to the public Lady Leicester, who is a Lady of the Bedchamber, and her daughters have sold fruit and vegetables off the estate to visitors to help pay for the Hall's tremendous upkeep. She has also turned the house laundry into a pottery, with seven craftsmen and electrically fired kilns.

Two pieces of Holkham pottery are Toby jugs of the Queen riding to the Trooping the Colour and the Duke of Edinburgh in naval uniform. Both Lady Anne and Lady Carey help in the production and painting of these jugs.

SINCE THEN

Sir Edward Coke lived at *STOKE POGES* until his death in 1634. When a friend sent a doctor to see him when he was ailing he replied that "he had upon him a disease which all the drugges of Asia, the gold of Africa, nor all the doctors of Europe could cure—old age."

Sir Edward's descendants sold the property to the Gayer family in 1720, and forty years later it was bought by Thomas Penn, son of the founder of Pennsylvania. His son John pulled down most of the old building, and built an enormous eighteenth-century mansion known as Stoke Park. In an adjoining field of thirteen acres—now owned by the National Trust—John Penn erected a memorial to Gray, the poet. The property remained in the Penn family until 1848. The house, which is now a golf clubhouse, contains a piece of the elm under which William Penn made his treaty with the Indians.

BELVOIR CASTLE is still the seat of the Rutland family, but the present building is not the ancient castle that the witches knew. The first castle was pulled down, the second one destroyed during the Civil War, and the present Castle built at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

After the death of the second Duke of Buckingham his mansion, *CLIVEDEN*,* was bought by Lord George Hamilton, who fought under Marlborough and was the first Englishman to hold the title of Field-Marshal. He was even more celebrated, however, as the husband of Elizabeth Villiers, a kinswoman of Buckingham's. She was fat and very plain. Swift declared that she "squinted like a dragon," and every one admitted that she was unprepossessing—even, probably, William III, whose mistress she had been. But Swift also considered her the wisest woman he ever knew, and her advice was sought by statesmen of all parties.

Lord George was a personal friend of the King, who arranged the marriage, and created him Earl of Orkney. He was succeeded by his daughter Anne, Countess of Orkney in her own right. She let Cliveden to Frederick, Prince of Wales, an unpleasant man who was, however,

devoted to music. It was during his tenancy that Dr Arne's *Rule, Britannia!* was first performed, in a rustic theatre in the woods. It was also at Cliveden that Prince Frederick received the blow in his chest from a tennis- or cricket-ball which ultimately led to his death. He never came to the throne, and his son, George III, succeeded Frederick's father, George II.

The mansion Buckingham built was totally destroyed by fire in 1793, with the exception of the beautiful red-brick terraces. It was rebuilt for a new owner in 1824. Again it was burnt down, and rebuilt in its present classic style by Sir Charles Barry, designer of the Houses of Parliament.

Cliveden was eventually bought by William Waldorf Astor, later the first Viscount Astor,¹ who made sweeping changes. He later gave it as a wedding-gift to his son, the second Viscount Astor, on his marriage to Nancy Witcher, of Virginia, who as Nancy Astor achieved fame as the first woman to sit in the House of Commons.

In the First World War Lord and Lady Astor lent Taplow Lodge and part of the magnificent grounds of Cliveden to the Canadian Red Cross, who built a hospital in which more than 23,000 men were nursed. During the Second World War Cliveden was used for the same purpose, and 25,168 men were looked after there.

The real pride of Cliveden, which was given to the National Trust by Lord Astor in 1942, is the gardens, with their wooded walks, hanging woods growing right down to the ribbon of the Thames below, grass walks and lawns, and a rhododendron valley.

Both the house and the gardens are open to the public twice a week between April and October.

HELMSLEY CASTLE, the Duke of Buckingham's home in Yorkshire, has long been a ruin, but the house where he died at KIRBY MOORSIDE is still standing—and occupied. The house was divided into two about 1800. One part has been turned into a shop, and the other into a dwelling, but the shell and the roof of the whole building are unaltered, and most of the house is still as it was when Buckingham died there. Apart from the alterations to one or two internal walls, the addition of the shop-front and some "modern conveniences" are the only changes that have been made in the picturesque old house.

The present owner declares that he is "sorry, but also glad," that he has never seen Buckingham's ghost!

¹ See Chapter III, under Hever Castle, and Chapter VI, under Neighbouring Pleasures.

NEIGHBOURING PLEASURES

YORKSHIRE is rich in ghosts of all kinds, pleasant and unpleasant, and the Duke of Buckingham must have plenty of company when he goes hunting the spirit fox at midnight from Kirby Moorside.

Not far away, as a ghost flies, are the AYTON CROSSROADS, a few miles from Scarborough. They are haunted by two terrifying ghosts. One is a headless woman in a blood-red cloak who seeps out of the fog on a winter's night and paces beside any horseman, no matter how fast he gallops. The other ghost of the crossroads rides beside travellers on a milk-white horse, uttering bloodcurdling yells as she gallops and gallops through the night.

At FARNDALE, just north of Kirby Moorside, once lived a creature of a very different kind—the famous Farndale Hob. He “belonged” to Jonathan Gray, a farmer, and he earned his nightly jug of cream by helping with the threshing, by carting hay, and by shearing. The Hob was a pleasant little fellow, and had been in the family for generations. In fact, he had been handed down from father to son with the property. But Jonathan Gray's wife died, and when he married again his new wife refused to place a jug of cream for the Hob in the barn every night, as was his right. So the Hob went on strike. No cream, no work, and from that day onward, bad luck dogged the farmer and his wife, and, churn as they would, butter would never form.

One of the most famous hauntings in Yorkshire is that of the Drumming Well at HARPHAM, near Great Driffeld. During an archery contest in the reign of one of the early Edwards the squire of the manor pushed a drummer-boy into the well in a fit of anger. The mother vowed that for ever after, whenever one of the squire's family (their name was St Quintin) was going to die, the drowned drummer-boy would beat his drum.

Another story of a drumming ghost is told of RICHMOND CASTLE, where long ago an underground passage was linked with legends of the sleeping King Arthur.¹ Soldiers stationed at the castle told the drummer-boy of the legend, and sent him off down the long, cold passage to find the sleeping hero.

“Keep on walking and drumming!” they told the boy. They heard the beat of his drum growing fainter and fainter in the distance; but

¹ See Chapter III.

he never returned. He has never been seen again, but the beating of his drum has been heard many times.

North of Richmond Castle in Durham, is the ancient RABY CASTLE,* whose history goes back to the time of Canute. Many famous families have been connected with this fine old building, including the Nevilles. One of them, Ralph, Earl of Westmorland, married one of John of Gaunt's¹ daughters. They had fourteen children, the youngest of them being "Rose of Raby," who afterwards became the mother of Edward IV and Richard III. In 1624 the castle passed to Sir Henry Vane, whose descendants have lived there ever since.

Although several drastic changes have been carried out, the old building remains a great feudal castle, possessing nine great towers of different heights and shapes, and an enormous entrance-hall with a twelve-foot fireplace.

Raby Castle is open to the public on two afternoons a week.

Back in Yorkshire again, near Guisborough, LONGHULL MANOR was once the home of Sir Thomas Chaloner. His father, another Sir Thomas, had been given the manor by Queen Mary, and he himself, after travelling widely on the Continent, set up the first alum works in England. Till then the production of alum had been a Papal monopoly, the alum being used in the preparation of Italian dyes. Sir Thomas, realizing its possibilities as a money-maker, is said to have smuggled some of the Pope's men out of Italy in barrels to teach him the secrets of the industry. The Pope was so furious that he cursed Sir Thomas with one of the most famous and all-embracing curses of all time:

In the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the name of the Virgin Mary, in the name of the angels and arch-angels, of cherubim and seraphim, of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, evangelists, and saints. He cursed him in the house, in the church, in the field, in the highway, in the path, in the wood, in the water; in living; in dying; in eating, in drinking, in hunger, in thirst, in fasting, in sleep, in walking, in standing, in sitting, in lying, in working, in resting, in the hair of his head, in his brains, in his temples, in his ears, in his eyebrows, in his eyes, in his cheeks, in his jaws, in his teeth, in his lips, in his throat, in his breast, in his heart, in his fingers, in his hips, in his knees, in his legs, in his feet, and in his toenails.

Such a curse has been equalled only by the one uttered by the great Lord Cardinal when cursing the Jackdaw of Rheims. As with the Pope,

¹ See Chapter V, under Tutbury Castle.

Never was heard such a terrible curse!
But what gave rise
To no little surprise,
Nobody seem'd one penny the worse!

The Pope's curse on Sir Thomas Chaloner had precisely the same effect, and his new industry flourished exceedingly.

A century earlier than this adventure of Sir Thomas Chaloner's some fishermen at near-by SKINNINGGROVE, near Loftus, caught a merman in their nets. He was taken to an empty cottage near the coast, and fed with raw fish, which was all he desired. He soon became a great favourite with the crowds which gathered to see him; they were charmed by his courteous manners. He paid particular attention to any "fayre maydes" among the onlookers, gazing at them "as if his phlegmaticke breaste had been touched with a sparke of love."

But the merman must have missed his native element more than he appreciated the "fayre maydes," for he disappeared back to the sea, and was, alas, never seen again.

Farther south again, a mile to the north of Harpham, is BURTON AGNES HALL,* celebrated for its association with a haunting skull.

Old Burton Agnes Hall once belonged to John of Gaunt, and it came into the possession of the Griffith family through the marriage of his great-granddaughter to one of the family. In the early seventeenth century the owner was Sir Henry Griffith, who, when he died, left the mansion to his three daughters. They called in Inigo Jones to remodel the house, and the oldest part of the present mansion was part of what Jones built for them.

Anne, the youngest of the three sisters, loved the house best of all the sisters, particularly its fine staircase, its Great Saloon, and its many windows. One day Anne set off to see the St Quintins at Harpham, but on the way she was attacked by pedlars, who tried to wrench an heirloom ring off her finger. When Anne struggled she was cudgelled and left for dead. But passers-by discovered the poor girl, and she was carried back to her beloved Burton Agnes Hall.

As Anne lay dying she asked her sisters to promise to keep her skull for ever in the house she loved so well, and they agreed. But, thinking the request was only a dying fantasy of Anne's, when she did die, five days later, they buried her in the usual way.

Immediately tremendous noises troubled the house. Doors slammed, invisible objects crashed to the floor with thunderous reverberations,

and groans followed the two sisters wherever they went. Finally, remembering their promise, they decided to consult the vicar. He suggested that the solution to the problem might lie in the coffin—and when it was opened Anne's body was found to be in perfect condition, but her head was already a skull!

The skull was taken into the house, and as long as it was kept there all was peaceful. But one day a maid threw the skull on to a passing cart. The horse and the cart became rooted to the spot, and it was only after the skull had been rescued and replaced in its usual corner that horse and cart were able to move once again.

After that the skull was bricked up in a wall—for safe-keeping!

Various people have seen the whole ghost of Anne Griffith, not headless, as one might expect, haunting the house, quite quietly, with a gentle rustle of silk.

One of Anne's sisters, Frances, married Sir Matthew Boynton, and the Hall has belonged to the Boynton family ever since.

It is open to the public three times a week from May to October.

In Norfolk, some way to the south of Holkham Hall, stands HOUGHTON HALL. It is one of the many 'stately homes' with its own family ghost. Here the ghost of Dorothy Walpole, sister of Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole, haunts the magnificent house he built on the site of his old ancestral home. She must be a restless ghost indeed, for, wearing the same brown brocade dress in which she haunts Houghton Hall, Dorothy Walpole is also said to haunt RAYNHAM HALL, near by. Some say that she is searching for her children, whom her husband took away from her when their marriage was broken up. She has been seen quite recently, wearing "a sort of coif" on her head, but with only dark hollows where her eyes should have been. . . .

Other members of the Walpole family seem to have been somewhat eccentric as well as Dorothy (if a ghost may be classed as being eccentric at all, that is). ILSINGTON HALL, in Dorsetshire, has a strange story of the unorthodox George Walpole, grandson of the great Prime Minister, Sir Robert, and grandnephew of the ghostly Dorothy. George's father, who was another Robert Walpole, Earl of Orford, came into the possession of Ilsington Hall (built by Inigo Jones) by marriage.

George's eccentricity took the unusual form of a passion for driving stags as a four-in-hand. His life was fraught with danger. He was once nearly torn to pieces by a pack of hounds when driving his strange team through the countryside, and he managed to reach the safety of

the Ram Inn (now the Rutland Arms) only in the nick of time. Sport did, however, end his days. He was watching a coursing match from the window of Ilsington Hall. Being in too much of a hurry to join the throng to go out of the door, he rushed straight through a window, fell on his head, and died!

Another Norfolk legend concerns the capital, NORWICH, itself. Sir Thomas Erpington (who had fought at Agincourt) returned home from the wars to find that his wife had been receiving love-letters from a friar named Brother John. Sir Thomas, with mischief in his heart, invited the friar to visit him, and gave him such a beating that he killed him. The matter had gone rather further than he had intended, and he wanted no body lying about, so he and a faithful servant carried the dead Brother John into the grounds of the neighbouring friary and propped him up against a wall.

No sooner had the knight and his man vanished than another friar came along—Brother Richard. He too had a grudge against Brother John, and, seeing him sitting there all unsuspecting, and an excellent target, dropped a brick on his head. Brother John pitched forward so heavily that Brother Richard realized he must be dead, and, thinking he had killed him, heaved the body over the friary wall and into the knight's property again.

Sir Thomas's redoubtable servant, finding the body once more on his master's land, dressed it in armour, set it on a horse, and, giving the horse a good smack on the rump, sent it after the fleeing Brother Richard. Brother Richard's uneasy conscience turned the friar in armour into a supernatural visitation, and he hastened to confess to a crime he had not committed.

But he never reached the gallows.

Sir Thomas, remembering his knightly vows, came forward and confessed that it was he, and not Brother Richard, who had murdered the unfortunate and unpopular Brother John—the friar who was 'killed' twice.

But, of course, the most famous Norfolk ghosts are the originals of "The Babes in the Wood," who were Norfolk children. WAYLAND WOOD, where they were left by their uncles' ruffians, is said to be haunted by wailing cries and by two little figures, hand in hand, forever seeking a way out.

BISHAM ABBEY, near Cliveden, on the Thames, in Berkshire, has for generations been associated with stories of the murder of little William Hoby.

The property was given by Henry VIII to Anne of Cleves, who never lived there, and she passed it on exchange to Sir Thomas Hoby. Princess Elizabeth was confined there for a time under the care of Sir Thomas and his wife, who was one of the five brilliant daughters of Sir Anthony Cooke, of Essex, one-time tutor to King Edward VI. He was a noted Latin, Greek, and mathematical scholar, and under his tutorship his daughters Mildred and Anne became the two most learned women in England. They also made brilliant marriages. Mildred became Lady Burghley, wife of Elizabeth's great Minister; Ann became Lady Bacon, mother of two brilliant, worldly sons, Anthony and Francis. The third daughter, Margaret, married Sir Ralph Rowlett. The fourth daughter, Katherine, also a noted Greek scholar, became Lady Killigrew, while the fifth daughter, Elizabeth, married Sir Thomas Hoby, whom Elizabeth appointed Ambassador to France.

Lady Hoby wrote verses in Latin and Greek, and is said to have become so exasperated with her little son, William, for constantly blotting his copybook that she beat him to death. Now her ghost is said to haunt the manor house—and the river mists. Legend says she has been seen gliding from a bedroom washing her hands in an unsupported basin that floats before her! She has been seen wearing a coif, weeds, and wimple, her face dead white, for ever trying to wash the foul deed from her dead white hands.

Many years later, when alterations were being made to a window, some well-blotted copybooks of Elizabeth's day were found hidden between the joists and the skirting-board.

Only the refectory and the octagonal tower at Bisham Abbey belong to the original Augustine priory, the rest having been erected by Sir Philip Hoby during the sixteenth century. A few years ago the Abbey was taken over by the National Central Council for Physical Recreation, and it is now used for physical-training courses for young people from all parts of the world. The Abbey has also been used for four-week Outward Bound courses for fifty factory and office girls. Most of the girls who attend the course are financed by their firms, who regard the fee as a good investment. They are given instruction in sailing, canoeing, riding, and camping—all designed to develop initiative, responsibility, and self-reliance.

The great tithe barn at the Abbey (which has appeared in TV programmes) still exists, its framework of Spanish chestnut little impaired by time. In 1780 Bisham Abbey was sold to the Vansittarts, and the present owner, Miss Phyllis Vansittart-Neale lives near by at Bisham Grange.

FELPHAM, near Bognor, on the Sussex coast, was the village where the strange visionary, poet, and artist William Blake saw a fairy's funeral. He had moved from London to Felpham in 1800 with his devoted wife and sister, and for three years they lived in a thatched cottage which looked out over the sea. Visions crowded in on him ceaselessly all this time, and one day, when walking alone in his garden, he had this strange experience:

There was a great stillness among the branches and flowers, and more than common sweetness in the air; I heard a low and pleasant sound, and I knew not whence it came. At last I saw the broad leaf of a flower move, and underneath I saw a procession of creatures, of the size and colour of green and grey grasshoppers, bearing a body laid out on a rose-leaf, which they buried with songs, and then disappeared. It was a fairy's funeral!

By ancient tradition it was on the beach at BOSHAM, between Portsmouth and Chichester, that Canute gave the lesson in the limitation of kingship to his sycophant courtiers, and one of his daughters, a little Princess of seven or eight, lies in Bosham Church. It was from Bosham that Harold sailed on his ill-fated voyage, when he was wrecked on the French coast—and rescued by William the Bastard (so soon to be William the Conqueror). In the Bayeux Tapestry there is a picture of Harold entering Bosham Church to receive the sacrament before setting out on his journey.

While he was staying at William's Court, some unknown oath was extracted from Harold—possibly an oath to relinquish all claim to the English throne—but, as it was extracted under duress, Harold never felt himself bound by it. At that time the nominal ruler was Edward the Confessor, the pious King with the milk-white hair and the brilliant eyes. He had no right to decide who should succeed him, for that right belonged to the Witan, but the vacillating Edward seems, nevertheless, to have promised the throne to two people, and possibly to three. Two of them were Harold, his brother-in-law (and for many years the actual ruler of England), and William of Normandy, his cousin. On Edward's death Harold became king by right of choice by the Witan, but William the Bastard killed him at Hastings, and became William the Conqueror by right of battle.

CORFE CASTLE,* near Swanage, and well to the west of Portsmouth, at one time belonged to the Lady Hatton who so disastrously married Sir Edward Coke. Her first husband, Sir William Newport (who assumed the name of Hatton), had been left the castle by his uncle Sir Christopher Hatton, Queen Elizabeth's "dancing Chancellor."

Sir Christopher had first attracted attention at Court by his nimble performance of the sprightly galliard, a gay dance of five steps and a leap in the air, much favoured by Elizabeth herself. If he had any matrimonial ambitions he kept them to himself, and he remained Elizabeth's devoted dancing bachelor. He had, of course, other interests, including an illegitimate daughter (also Elizabeth), who disrupted her father's serenity by herself having an illegitimate daughter (again an Elizabeth) by Sir Christopher's old enemy, Sir John Perrot, a rumbustious man reputed to be an illegitimate son of Henry VIII. He certainly strongly resembled him.

About 1571 Queen Elizabeth gave Corfe Castle to her dancing Chancellor, who was one of the close band of fifty Gentlemen Pensioners. They had been instituted by Henry VIII as a complement to the fifty Yeomen of the Guard instituted by his father, Henry VII. The Gentlemen Pensioners were chosen for skill at arms, and their primary duty was to perform at the tournaments that both Henry and Elizabeth enjoyed so heartily. They were expected to provide themselves with a full suit of armour, three horses, a page, an archer, and a custrel—an attendant armed with a three-edged sword. The Gentlemen Pensioners' duties were exacting. They had to joust in the tournaments, attend the King or Queen on their "progresses" through the kingdom, and at chapel, and be willing to spend a good sum of money on serving-men, mounts, and equipment. But all positions at Court were likely to lead to valuable perquisites, and Sir Christopher must have felt well satisfied when he was rewarded with Corfe Castle. He became responsible for dealing with pirates and smugglers in the vicinity, but he was allowed to hunt red deer (and that was privilege indeed) and he had a right to all the wreckage washed up on the near-by shore.

Corfe Castle had a long history of gory tragedy. The first was the murder in 978 of the boy King Edward by his wicked stepmother, Elfrida, who wanted the throne for her own son. When young Edward was out hunting "hee rode to the castell gate" at the Queen's invitation to drink a stirrup cup. But "the cuppe was noe sooner at his mouth but a knife was at his back"—thrust into the young body by a servant of the treacherous Queen. "The Kinge, findeing himselfe hurt, sett spurs to his horse . . . but the wounde beeng deepe . . . he felle from his horse, which dragged him by one foot hanging in the stirrup, until he was left dead. . . ." Elfrida's son, who did succeed to the throne, was the one king every one has heard of—Ethelred the Unready.

King John made the castle a royal residence, and left a typically unsavoury memory by starving to death twenty-two French nobles whom he imprisoned in the dungeons.

Treachery killed a young king at the gate of the castle. Treachery brought about the castle's own destruction. During the Civil War the treachery of an officer of the garrison allowed the Parliamentary troops to gain possession, and the fine old building was undermined, blown up, and brought to total ruin. For many years the ruins were said to be haunted by lights and figures which flitted through the broken walls and desolation. But after a gang of smugglers had been caught here the "spirits" disappeared!

The castle is open to the public every day.

Down on the CORNISH COAST, not far from Boconnoc, Cornish people swear that during the last War they saw the ghosts of men lost by submarine action haunting the rocks and beaches, swinging ghostly lights to entice enemy ships to destruction on the shore.

The phantom lights were never seen by Allied ships. . . .

II

Assassination in High Places

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

SIR JOHN THYNNE, Comptroller to the Household of Princess Elizabeth during the reign of Queen Mary, who built the Wiltshire mansion, LONGLEAT.* His wife,

CHRISTIAN GRESHAM, sister of Sir Thomas Gresham, founder of the Royal Exchange, whom legend says was a foundling "discovered" by a grasshopper. In Charles II's reign the owner of Longleat was

SIR THOMAS THYNNE, a battered rake known as "Tom o' Ten Thousand," because of his wealth. He married

LADY ELIZABETH PERCY, the richest heiress in England. She was fourteen, and already the widow of the boy Earl of Ogle. Her wealth (and no doubt her person) attracted the desires of the Swedish adventurer

CHARLES VON KÖNIGSMARCK, who sent three assassins to murder Thomas Thynne on his way along Pall Mall, London. This Königsmarck was the brother of

PHILIP VON KÖNIGSMARCK, the lover of George I's lovely young wife. He "disappeared" one wet Sunday night, probably murdered at the instigation of George I.

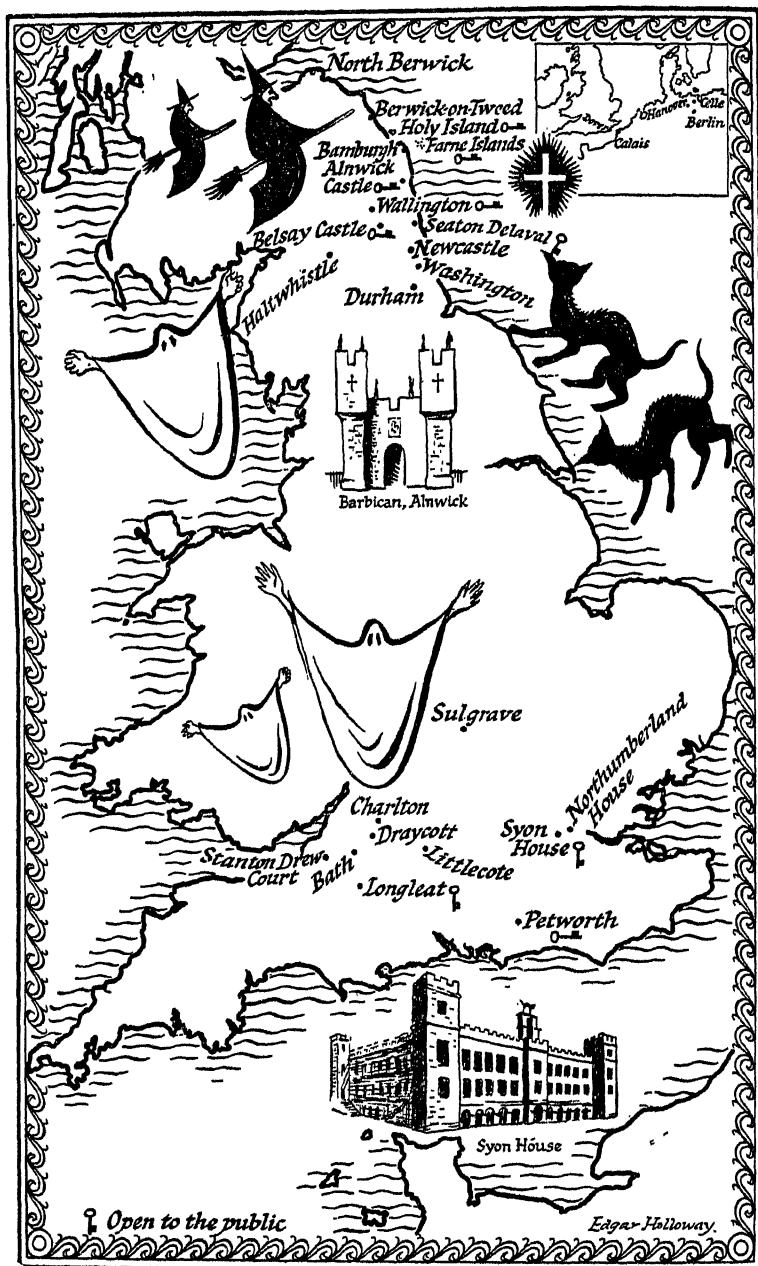
PRINCESS SOPHIA DOROTHEA, George's wife, was imprisoned by him with unrelenting severity for thirty-two years in the gloomy castle of Ahlden, some twenty miles from Hanover. He came to England without her. Her devoted retainer,

FRÄULEIN VON DEM KNESEBECK, was also imprisoned—in a fortress perched on fantastic crags. A faithful servant, a smuggled letter, a hidden rope, and she escaped through the forest to Brunswick.
Meanwhile Elizabeth Percy had married yet again, this time

CHARLES SEYMOUR, sixth Duke of Somerset, an impossible man, who disinherited one of his daughters because she sat down in his presence!
Lady Elizabeth Percy's mother had also married again, this time

RALPH, DUKE OF MONTAGU, Ambassador to France, and the lover of both
BARBARA CASTLEMAINE, Charles II's mistress, and her self-willed young daughter

ANNE. When Montagu's intrigues were discovered Charles was furious, and Montagu fell from favour. He retaliated by revealing the King's private correspondence with the French King Louis XIV discussing Charles's willingness to become a pensioner of France.



II

These people, rich, imperious, murderous, tragic, quick-on-the-draw—or merely eccentric—are the links in a story of a bride twice widowed when she was still a child, a murder in Pall Mall, a villain unhanged, and a daughter disinherited. It is linked with the story of the grasshopper of the Greshams, and through the murder in Pall Mall to the tragic love-story of the beautiful young wife of George I. It tells of the young bride's stepfather, who loved a king's mistress and a king's daughter, and how, for revenge, he betrayed the King's trust.¹

On the debit side it is a story of scheming and cunning, plotting and double-crossing. On the credit side it is the story of the "discovery" of Chaucer, the defiance of a bishop, the faithful devotion of a lady-in-waiting.

These stories link the 'stately homes' of Longleat* (Wiltshire), Petworth* (Sussex), Alnwick Castle* (Northumberland), Northumberland House (London), and Syon House* (Middlesex).

The story begins with Lady Elizabeth Percy, the richest little girl in England. She was only four when her father, Josceline, the eleventh and last Earl of Northumberland, died of fever in Turin, leaving her heiress to the honours and the vast estates of the Percy family. The child was brought up by her grandmother, the Dowager Countess, who was very much aware that Elizabeth was a strong card to play in building up the family fortunes still further. She knew that Elizabeth was an heiress any man was likely to covet.

Charles II was one of them. He wanted her, not for himself, but for one of his sons. Like all the Stuarts, Charles was always short of money, and he worked hard to make profitable matches for all his children. He married his nine-year-old son, Henry Fitz Roy, the Duke of Grafton (Barbara Castlemaine's son), to Isabella, the five-year-old daughter of Henry Bennet,² the rich Earl of Arlington, and now he suggested marrying Lady Elizabeth Percy (who was then about twelve) to his son Charles Lennox, the Duke of Richmond (Louise de K  roualle's son).

¹ See Chapter IX.

² See Chapter VI, under Euston, and Chapter IX.

The Dowager Countess was not interested. She wanted nothing to do with bastards, even royal ones. She said an emphatic "No" to that idea, and a few weeks later gave the child to Henry Cavendish, Earl of Ogle, the fifteen-year-old heir to the second Duke of Newcastle.

Henry has been described as "the ugliest, saddest creature." He was a miserable, unhealthy boy, and, though he was sent on to the Continent immediately after his marriage, to grow up and to grow stronger, he died within the year.

The Dowager Countess began casting her net again, and before long married her granddaughter, still only a child of fourteen or so, to Sir Thomas Thynne, a battered rake who had little to recommend him except his money, and, after all, Elizabeth herself had plenty of that.

Thomas Thynne had inherited LONGLEAT in 1670, a year before the four-year-old Lady Elizabeth inherited the Percy honours and estates.

The Thynnes trace their ancestry from a knight who came over from France to support King John in his struggles against the barons. One of his descendants was William Thynne, Master of the Household of Henry VIII—the man who assembled and published the first collection of Chaucer's works. Sir John Thynne, who built Longleat, was his nephew, and, like his uncle, much involved in royal affairs. He had two sessions in the Tower of London for his support of the Lord Protector Somerset, but he weathered that storm all right, and was later appointed Comptroller to the Household of Princess Elizabeth during "Bloody" Mary's reign. His wife was Christian Gresham, daughter of a Lord Mayor of London, and sister of Sir Thomas Gresham, founder of the Royal Exchange, and hero of the strange story of the grasshopper. The story is a fairy-tale of true colour and romance, and to commemorate it the Greshams adopted a grasshopper as their family emblem. One of them, eight feet long and made of copper, is still turning to this day on the top of the Royal Exchange building in London. It is a charming story that only a hidebound realist could reject, but, unfortunately, there is not a word of truth in it.

Thomas Gresham was a cast-away baby, so the legend says, soon after his birth about 1519, and he would have died as he lay in a field in Kent had not a passer-by been attracted to the child by the chirruping of a grasshopper. In fact, Thomas was the son of Sir Richard Gresham, Lord Mayor of London.

As a young man Thomas served as a financial agent under the Crown in Flanders, and bought "gonne-powder and saltpeter" for Henry VIII, and smuggled bullion into England in dry vats containing a thousand demi-lancers' harness. For Edward VI Thomas Gresham performed a very different service. He brought him the "great present of a payre of long Spanish silke stockings." But Thomas Gresham is chiefly remembered for the founding of the Royal Exchange—a scheme his father had designed, and one long needed, "consydering whatt a sittey London ys, and that in so many yerres they have nott founde the menes to make a Boursel but must walke in the raine, when ytt raineth, more lyke pedlars than merchants."

In after-years Sir Thomas Gresham was one of the "gaolers" provided by Elizabeth for Lady Mary Grey,¹ Lady Jane's sister, after she had infuriated the Queen by marrying against her consent.

The Thomas Thynne who married Lady Elizabeth Percy was a singularly unattractive man. The manner of his death was really the only notable thing about him. He was always at loggerheads with Charles II, who disliked him (and rebuked him), but he was a friend of Monmouth's, and finally died in his arms.

He did not become a friend of his wife's. She went off—some say she *ran* off—immediately after the wedding, to live at The Hague with the British Ambassador and his wife, and her marriage was never consummated.

It was at the Embassy that she again met the dashing Swedish adventurer Count Charles von Königsmarck. He was a man typical of his time, undisciplined, unscrupulous, handsome, amusing, and gallant—willing to sell his sword to the highest bidder.

History says little about Lady Elizabeth's desires in the matter, but to the impecunious young Count she was very desirable indeed. Twice he sent his henchman Captain Vratz to England to challenge Tom Thynne to a duel. He received no reply, except an oblique one. Thynne sent six men to France to murder Königsmarck. Königsmarck retaliated by sending Captain Vratz and two hired assassins, Lieutenant Stern (a Swede) and one Boroski (a Pole), to murder Thynne. Königsmarck came over to London to supervise matters, and one night Thynne was murdered in his coach as he was driving along Pall Mall, then a lonely road

¹ See Chapter III.

bordering St James's Park. The men shot him through the coach windows. The Duke of Monmouth, who had been driving with Thynne, had left the coach only a few minutes before the attack. On hearing the news he hurried to visit the wounded man. When Thynne died twenty-four hours later, he died in Monmouth's arms.

Vratz, Stern, and Boroski were all arrested. So was Königs-marck, as he tried to escape in disguise from Gravesend. There was a price of £200 on his head, and he was recognized by one of Monmouth's men.

The three assassins were hanged, but Königs-marck, the master-mind, was acquitted by a bribed court. But he never achieved the Lady Elizabeth. He was sentenced to banishment from England, and left hastily. The Duke of Devonshire,¹ one of the many affronted by the flagrant miscarriage of justice, challenged Königs-marck to a duel, offering to meet him in Calais. But Charles von Königs-marck, preferring the unknown to the known (for Devonshire was a fine duellist), declined the invitation, joined the Venetian Army, and went off to the wars in Greece. He was killed there instead.

The dead Sir Thomas Thynne was succeeded by his cousin, another Thomas Thynne, later created Baron Thynne and Viscount Weymouth. He is chiefly remembered for his championship of Bishop Ken—the same chaplain Ken who had refused to entertain Nell Gwynn in his prebendary house at Winchester.

Charles II was never a man to bear malice. His good temper was proverbial, and when the Bishop of Bath and Wells died, and his counsellors were seeking a successor, Charles said, "Where's that little fellow who wouldn't give poor Nelly a lodging? Give the See to him!"

So the little, dark-haired Thomas Ken became Bishop of Bath and Wells.

In James II's reign Bishop Ken was one of the Seven Bishops thrown into the Tower for opposing the King's views on religious tolerance. The case created enormous public feeling, and as the Bishops were being taken by barge to the Tower people crowded waist-deep into the river seeking the Bishops' blessing and shouting encouragement. And, although a picked jury was chosen for their trial, the fury of the people was even more menacing than the fury of the King. The Bishops were acquitted,

¹ See Chapter IX.

and as the news was shouted abroad waiting horsemen spurred along each road to carry the news of the acquittal to every part of the country. But Ken was not out of trouble yet. After James had fled the country he refused to take the oath of allegiance to William, for he considered that his oath to James was still binding. He was deprived of his See, and at the invitation of Thomas Thynne, an old college friend, he went (with his library) to live at Longleat, and it was there that he died.

Ken, whose much older half-sister married Izaak Walton, author of the *Compleat Angler*, wrote the hymns "Awake, my soul, and with the sun," and "Glory to Thee, my God, this night."

Charles von Königsmarck's younger brother, Philip, had a love-affair as unsatisfactory as his brother's, but it was a less sordid story, except for his death, which was sudden, probably painful, and, to this day, unexplained.

Philip von Königsmarck was an adventurer too, but he fell genuinely in love with the lively, witty young wife of Prince George of Hanover, later George I of England.

George was a great-grandson of James I, but he had inherited none of the Stuart charm (neither, for that matter, had James). He was a coarse, sensual man, vindictive and dour, with an iron resolution and a string of mistresses, some of whom he imported into England. He was a cousin of the charming and much indulged Sophia Dorothea, a daughter of his uncle of Celle and his French wife, formerly his mistress. Neither Sophia Dorothea nor George desired the marriage. They had always disliked each other, but Sophia's parents wanted the position the marriage would ensure for her (for her mother's indiscretion was not to be lightly overlooked). George's parents needed the handsome dowry which was offered with Sophia. So the marriage took place, with hatred in the heart of both the groom and the bride—and fresh money in the Hanoverian coffers.

Sophia's money was used to build a magnificent new stables for the palace in Hanover, to build a new hunting-box for her husband and his father, to construct fountains planned to rival the splendour of Versailles, to pay opera singers, to bedeck the royal mistresses.

Sophia, imaginative, musical, and gay, missed the affectionate atmosphere of her parents' Court at Celle. Her hateful husband and she had nothing in common, and she turned for sympathy, for companionship, for love, to Philip von Königsmarck, like

his brother undisciplined, insolent, adventurous, amusing, and gallant.

Königsmarck, who was a good soldier, took service in the Hanoverian Army, and found many opportunities to visit the unhappy Princess. He was young, perhaps a little dazzled by his success at the Court, more than a little in love, and certainly indiscreet. He visited her alone, and at night, slipping up to her chambers through a secret door. And she found some brief happiness in their stolen meetings, and their stolen love. They wrote long, passionate—and foolish—letters whenever he was away on campaigns, and, though they both suspected that the letters were sometimes intercepted by their enemies, they wrote and wrote their love, deluging each other with their correspondence. The names they invented for their associates and enemies were all too transparent. Königsmarck literally wrote himself to death; Sophia to lifelong imprisonment.

When Army duties did not take him out of Hanover, Philip von Königsmarck lived near the palace. At night he would steal along the dark streets, through the secret door, and up the stone steps to the Princess's rooms, while no one stood guard over the lovers except the faithful Fräulein von dem Kneesebeck. It is possible that they were planning an elopement, an escape for the Princess from the wretched George and the whole Court, where she counted for nothing. By this time, however, George had had wind of their meetings.

One Sunday night Königsmarck was summoned from his lodgings. Instead of his usual splendour, he dressed in a poor grey suit with a cloak thrown over his shoulders against the rain. He slipped out of the house—and was never seen again.

Why was he wearing a poor suit? Was he tricked into thinking that the Princess had summoned him? No one will ever know. He was an excellent swordsman, and a chance quarrel with a wayfarer would have been unlikely to end in his death. It is more probable that George had him murdered. His body was never found. Wild stories circulated at once. He had been seized on his way to the Princess and flung into a hot oven. He had been stabbed to death, flung into quicklime, and bricked up in a basement. No one knows, but, whatever the truth, it is likely that Philip von Königsmarck fought valiantly for his life. At that time a sword was the one asset of an impoverished nobleman of any nation, and Philip had learnt swordsmanship in a hard and dangerous school.

For the Princess, Philip's death was only the beginning of a greater tragedy. She never learnt the truth of his disappearance. She was left to guess, to hope, to worry, to surmise—but she never learnt the truth. She was banished from her husband's Court, imprisoned in the gloomy castle of Ahlden, and later divorced. Her mother was allowed to see her occasionally, her children never.

The faithful and devoted *Fräulein von dem Knesebeck*, who had often acted as courier for the Princess's love-letters to *Königsmarch*, as well as watch-dog, was also arrested and imprisoned, in the ancient fortress of *Scharsfels*. It was a fantastic castle, perched on top of the wild crags high above the tree-tops. The tower where the *Fräulein* was imprisoned could be entered only across a drawbridge leading from the top story of the main building. Escape was impossible—or so it seemed. But the *Fräulein* was undaunted and untamable. She staunchly refused to give any hint of incriminating evidence against the Princess, and during the three long years she was imprisoned (without any hope of release) she defied authority, continually and determinedly, writing her opinion of everybody, including George and his father, all over the walls, in charcoal.

It was only fitting that this dauntless woman should escape from this escape-proof castle—and escape she did, by an adventure thoroughly in keeping with the whole atmosphere of the fantastic fortress.

One day she was startled to see a letter dangling before her window. Scarcely believing her eyes, she snatched the letter to her, hastily scanning its contents. It was from a faithful servant of the Princess's. He had bided his time, obtained employment at *Scharsfels* as a tiler, and, while repairing the roof, let the letter down on a cord to the imprisoned woman. Some time later he managed to make a hole through the roof, and lowered himself into her chamber, taking a long rope with him. He made one end fast, and with infinite courage the intrepid woman slid down the high wall of the tower, and hid in the castle ditch. The man slid down after her, and together they escaped, running and hiding along the winding tracks of the surrounding mountain forest till eventually they reached the safety of Brunswick.

The Princess was not so fortunate. In spite of all her pleas, her grim imprisonment went on and on, as grimly as before. When George succeeded his father as Elector of Hanover, Sophia wrote to her husband, asking forgiveness, and asking permission "to

see and embrace our beloved children"—another George and another Sophia Dorothea. The letter was unanswered. Her name was never mentioned at Court after her banishment, and her imprisonment continued year after year, with money enough, but with no friends or even a servant whom she could trust. Gossip said that George took care to see that his wife was well enough looked after, for he had been told that he would not long survive her—a worrying, nagging thought.

Sophia Dorothea's imprisonment lasted thirty-two years, and her only glimpse of the real world was from the windows of her coach as she was driven at great speed though the near-by countryside, surrounded by armed guards with drawn swords.

In 1726 the unhappy Princess, no longer young, or witty, or gay, fell ill and died. The prophecy regarding George came true within the year.

While driving to Hanover from England on one of his periodic visits George suffered a paralytic seizure and died. Once more gossip sped round the Courts of Europe. Whispers and rumour said that his dead wife had caused his death, that her last letter had been flung into his coach as he drove past, and that shock and fright had caused the seizure. It could have been something like poetic justice if true.

Meanwhile Lady Elizabeth Percy had married yet again, this time (after a spirited resistance) Charles Seymour, sixth Duke of Somerset. She was living at PETWORTH,* Sussex when the Duke went a-wooing, accompanied by friends, lacqueys, and postillions. The haughty young lady refused even to see him. He took the hint, and returned to the attack with only a single retainer. This time Lady Elizabeth admitted him—and refused him. Eventually, however, her resistance was worn down. She consented to become the Duchess of Somerset, and her husband became overnight the master of ALNWICK CASTLE* (in Northumberland), SYON HOUSE* (in Middlesex), and NORTHUMBERLAND HOUSE (in London), as well as Petworth.

Charles was an overbearing man, proud, pompous, and absurd. He had always been self-important. When he married young Lady Elizabeth he became unbearable (though half of his importance and most of his money came from her). When he travelled outriders were sent ahead to clear the way of vulgar onlookers. When he slept in the afternoons (as was his custom) two of his daughters had to stand beside him. When one day he woke to find that one

daughter had allowed her attention to wander from him he forbade anyone to speak to her for a year! When his daughter Charlotte had the temerity to sit down in his presence he cut her out of his will (to the tune of £20,000). As it happened, it made no difference to Charlotte. She predeceased him.

No wonder Lady Elizabeth, whose experience of men had been unfortunate, hesitated to marry Charles Seymour!

The Duke pulled down a great deal of Petworth (where he eventually died in 1748), and rebuilt it much as it is to-day.

The Percy Lion—the one with the straight-out tail which now decorates Syon House (not far from Hampton Court)—stood originally on Northumberland House, the magnificent Percy Mansion facing Trafalgar Square. It was pulled down in 1874 to make way for Northumberland Avenue, but before that it had lorded it over the London scene since the beginning of the seventeenth century.

The mansion came into the Percy family through its purchase by Algernon, tenth Earl of Northumberland, one of the colourful figures of the Civil War, and the grandfather of the Lady Elizabeth of the three husbands.

This Northumberland's sympathies were with the Parliamentarians, but he jibbed at the thought of regicide, and retired to Petworth during the Commonwealth. Before that he had been given custody of Charles I's children at Syon House, and he readily gave the King permission to ride over from Hampton Court, where he was a prisoner, to see them. Northumberland found it a thankless and expensive task, and after a while handed the job over to his sister, the Countess of Leicester.

After the death of Cromwell, Algernon Percy returned to Northumberland House and negotiated with Monck for the Restoration. His son, Josceline, the eleventh and last Earl (who died of fever in Turin), was the father of the rich little heiress Elizabeth. Her mother, Elizabeth Wriothesley, youngest daughter of the Earl of Southampton, later married again, her second husband being Ralph, the Duke of Montagu, Ambassador to Paris.

Montagu's new wife, decorous in all things, not unnaturally disapproved of Barbara Castlemaine, especially when Barbara's name began to be coupled with her husband's. Barbara by this time was in her late thirties, still beautiful—and bad—and Montagu became infatuated by her. To complicate matters, Barbara's young daughter, Anne, became infatuated with Montagu. She was married to the Earl of Sussex, but she was

headstrong, bored, and jealous of her domineering mother. She showed Montagu some of her mother's letters to the Chevalier de Châtillon, with whom Barbara was having an *affaire* at the same time, and succeeded in supplanting Barbara in Montagu's affections. To complicate matters still further, Montagu sent King Charles some of Barbara's letters to the Chevalier, but Charles's fury was turned not against Barbara, but against Montagu. Montagu hastily promised to do all he could to push the suggested marriage between his stepdaughter, Lady Elizabeth Percy, and one of the King's sons. But, though he pretended, he had no influence in the matter, for the care of the child had been entrusted to her grandmother by her father's will. Charles was not appeased—and Montagu's fall followed.

He retaliated by revealing to Parliament the King's private correspondence with the King of France, Louis XIV, bargaining to become his pensioner.

After her escapade with Montagu, Anne was brought back to London and installed in Whitehall Palace near the King's apartments. He treated her with great kindness and sympathy, and persuaded her to return in peace to her husband.

Anne, who had a somewhat distracting early life, was in the interesting position of having three possible fathers.

Barbara Castlemaine's husband, Roger Palmer, regarded her as his, and left her his estate.

The Court decided that the "dangerous young man" Philip, second Earl of Chesterfield, was her father.

Barbara herself declared that it was King Charles.

SINCE THEN

ALNWICK CASTLE,* thirty-four miles north of Newcastle, still belongs to the Duke of Northumberland. It is open to the public several days a week between April and October.

It was a fortress much celebrated in Border history, and King Malcolm II of Scotland and his son and their followers were all slain outside the castle in 1093—by fair means or foul.

Alnwick was once described as a "very ancyent large beutifull and portlie Castell," but by 1760 it had fallen into disrepair, and was not totally restored till 1855. One of the new buildings was the Falconer's Tower. On it is a stone panel with a Victoria Cross carved in relief with the words "Inkerman 1854" and the initials of Henry Hugh

Manvers Percy. He won the V.C., rescuing fifty of his men who had run out of ammunition.

A firm in Regent Street, London, has made every Victoria Cross awarded. The decoration was designed by a member of the firm's staff when the award was instituted by Queen Victoria in 1856. The Crosses are still made from metal from Russian guns captured at Sebastopol during the Crimean War. So far, 1343 and three bars have been awarded.

A strange relic was once cherished in the abbey which stood near the castle—a foot of Simon de Montfort¹ set in silver after he had been hacked to pieces in the gory battle of Evesham.

SYON HOUSE,* near Hampton Court and Windsor Castle, is open to the public several days a week between April and October. Its story is more fully told in Chapter III.

PETWORTH,* with its beautiful State rooms (one decorated by Grinling Gibbons), was presented to the National Trust in 1947 by the third Lord Leconfield. The present fine building is largely the work of the Duke of Somerset, who was Lady Elizabeth Percy's third husband. The building incorporates a thirteenth-century chapel and galleries of the Percys.

Lady Elizabeth Percy had a large number of children by the Duke of Somerset—and predeceased him. All of the children predeceased him, too, except one son, Algernon. Elizabeth's husband remained as proud as ever after her death, and when his second wife made so bold as to tap him on the shoulder with her fan he rebuked her by saying, "Madam, my first wife was a *Percy*, and she never took such a liberty!" His second wife was Charlotte Finch, daughter of the Earl of Nottingham.

In spite of his failings, Somerset was a great favourite at Court, and Queen Anne, whose champion he had been on many occasions, rewarded him by appointing him her Master of the Horse. Lady Elizabeth became her Mistress of the Robes, replacing the great Duchess of Marlborough² in 1711.

Petworth has a history going right back to Henry I, who gave the original manor to his second wife, Adeliza.³ She handed it on to her brother, Joceline de Louvain. After that the estate was inherited in unbroken descent (though sometimes through the female line) by three intermarried families. First there were some twenty generations of

¹ See Chapter V, under Hathersage.

² See Chapter VIII.

³ See Chapter III, under Arundel Castle.

Percys, the last eleven being Earls of Northumberland; then two Seymours, Charles and his son Algernon; then six generations of Wyndhams, Earls of Egremont and Barons Leconfield.

Petworth is open to the public three times a week, except between January and March. One wing is still occupied by members of the Wyndham family.

LONGLEAT,* in Wiltshire, so rich in history, is still owned by the Marquis of Bath, a descendant of the Sir John Thynne who bought a disused priory in 1547 and began building his mansion. It is open to the public from April till the end of September.

The building of the house, described as the first well-built house in England, was interrupted when Sir John was twice sent to the Tower for his support of the Lord Protector Somerset. But such setbacks in a man's life were nothing uncommon in those days, and eventually the manor was finished. Alterations have, of course, been carried out at times, but the Elizabethan Great Hall still stands, with its magnificent timber roof reminiscent of the one in Middle Temple Hall in London.

During Sir Thomas Thynne's ownership the Duke of Monmouth was a visitor to Longleat; his father, Charles II, had been entertained there previously. In those days Longleat was the most important Renaissance house in England. It is still one of the finest.

NEIGHBOURING PLEASURES

All the coast and the near-coast north and south of Alnwick Castle is a treasure-house of romance, history, and legend, and NORTH BERWICK, on the Firth of Forth, is famous for one of the most notorious witch meetings in Great Britain. The locale was a haunted church. The time was All Hallows' Eve, and the man who summoned the witches Francis Hepburn, fifth Earl of Bothwell. He wanted the throne of Scotland for himself.

Two hundred witches met in that solemn spot on that awe-inspiring night, to plot the death and destruction of James VI of Scotland (later James I of England), his bride, and all the ships of his fleet, as they returned from James's marriage in Norway.

With horrible ritual the witches "tooke a Cat and christened it," and, after binding a dismembered corpse to the animal, "in the night following the said Cat was conuayed into the middest of the sea by all these witches, sayling in their riddles or cives . . . this doone, then did arise such a tempest in the sea, as a greater hath not bene seene." The

storm was so wild and severe that, though the witches' hopes were not entirely fulfilled, one ship was lost with all hands, and with it many of Anne's richest treasures.

Two leaders of the North Berwick coven were John Fian, a schoolmaster, and Agnes Simpson, a woman of good standing. Under torture both Fian and Simpson admitted their guilt, saying that the Devil had wrought charms to prevent King James's return from Norway.

Bothwell, realizing how his own position was endangered by Fian's capture, broke into Holyrood Palace, intending to slay the King. For an hour, lit only by the flickering light of torches, Bothwell's men and the King's men fought hand to hand, blood spilling out on to the rich tapestries of the palace. The King's men were valiant indeed. Bothwell was defeated. He escaped, but many of his men were captured and hanged.

It was the confession of Dr Fian that drew King James's serious attention to witchcraft. He was a foolish, pedantic man, slovenly and unpleasant in his habits, but he had genuine scholarship, and a sincere interest in current problems. After seven years' research King James wrote his famous *Daemonologie*, in which he argues the case for the belief in the black arts with shrewdness and perspicacity.

Fian was burnt at the stake in Edinburgh—and during the first twelve years of James's reign in England the total number of witches burnt and generally maltreated was so high that terror spread through the whole country.

James declined to believe in werewolves, but he did believe in the "Devil's Mark," a mark believed to be made by the Devil when he enlisted a new "lieutenant." The marks were supposedly insensible to pain, and were frequently tested during court cases by "witch-finders" running pins and needles into warts, moles, and other marks on the unfortunate creature under arrest. James also believed the old wives' tale that "if the deade carcase be . . . handled by the murtherer, it will gush out of bloud, as if the bloud were crying out to heaven for revenge for the murtherer."

Later James began to have doubts about witchcraft, and he was scholarly enough to admit them. A small boy began his disillusionment.

Shortly before James visited Leicester in 1616 nine women had been hanged as witches on the evidence of a boy of twelve or thirteen. James, interested as always in such matters, sent for the boy and found his story a pack of lies, and, consequently, that there had been a grave miscarriage of justice.

Being a wise fool, James tested one girl's "bewitchment" by sending "a proper courtier" to make love to her. He was not surprised to learn

that "quickly Cupid's arrows drove out the pretended darts of the Devil."

It is interesting that James's great favourite, George Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham, married a young woman who had been bewitched in childhood, and that Buckingham himself considered the advisability of consulting witches to restore the wandering wits of his brother, Viscount Purbeck.¹

Down the coast from North Berwick is BERWICK-ON-TWEED, on the very edge of Northumberland. The old castle there, now a ruin, enjoyed the typically gory existence of a Border stronghold, and added a few embellishments of its own.

After the great outlaw knight William Wallace had roused Scotland to take arms against Edward I, and been captured and tried in Westminster, he was sentenced to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. His head crowned in mockery with a laurel circlet, was placed upon London Bridge. Part of his body was sent to Berwick Castle. When the Countess of Buchan, greatly daring, crowned Robert Bruce in the Abbey of Scone the same Edward was so furious that he shut her up in a wooden cage in the castle—and kept her there for six years!

The most valiant effort of the Scots was in 1377, when seven of them surprised and captured the castle, and held it against 7000 archers and 3000 cavalry for eight days. Eight glorious days of defiance!

Ten miles or so farther down the coast lies HOLY ISLAND,* on which stands Lindisfarne Castle and the red sandstone ruins of the ancient Benedictine priory.

The castle, with its solid bastions and thick walls, was built about 1500, but it fell into decay after the Civil War, and it was not totally repaired until Sir Edwin Lutyens (designer of the Cenotaph in Whitehall) took the job in hand. Sir Edwin undertook the work at the request of Sir Edward de Stein, who, with his sister, presented the castle to the National Trust in 1944.

It is open to the public one afternoon a week.

Holy Island was the cradle of Christianity in Northumbria, and links with St Aidan and St Cuthbert are still treasured in the island and in the near-by Farne Islands. St Cuthbert ended his days as a hermit on Inner Farne Island, living in a cell hewn from the rock and lined with turf. He was immensely interested in all the bird life of the island, and would allow no one to molest any of the birds, particularly the eider duck, which is still known locally as "St Cuthbert's duck."

¹ See Chapter I.

After his death his body was taken back to Holy Island, where a Benedictine priory had been built. Nearly two hundred years after his death, pirates swooped down on Northumbria, plundering, murdering, and spreading destruction on all sides. The monks, fearing the desecration or theft of the saint's bones, took them up from his burial-place, and, with their flocks and herds, prepared to flee to the mainland. As they reached the foot of the high, rocky island they found it was high tide—but the seas rolled back and allowed them to make the passage across the sands in safety.

Lindisfarne Castle enjoyed an exciting two days during the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715. Two staunch Northumbrian Jacobites, Lancelot Errington and his nephew Mark, seized the island, having first enticed the garrison aboard their vessel and plied them heavily with good red wine. They and their men unfurled the Jacobite flag on the castle, and proclaimed Prince James¹ "King James III." Their triumph was short-lived. Troops moved down from Berwick the next day and surrounded the island. They captured the men promptly enough, but uncle and nephew had tunnelled their way out of the castle, and led the soldiers a wild dance before they too were finally caught.

THE FARNE ISLANDS* is a group of islands which actually vary in number—from fifteen to twenty-eight—according to the state of the tide! Both St Aidan, who founded the first Christian establishment in Northumbria (at Lindisfarne), and St Cuthbert were deeply attached to these islands, which are sanctuaries and breeding-places for sea-birds and grey seals. The only inhabitants nowadays are men who go out during the nesting season to see that the birds are undisturbed—a fact that must give great pleasure to St Cuthbert!

One of the islands is LONGSTONE, famous for its association with Grace Darling, whose father was keeper of the lighthouse erected there in 1826. The whole coast is treacherous, with treacherous currents, huge seas, and wild rocks, complicated always by the "disappearing" islands.

It was in 1838, when Grace was twenty-two, that the wreck of the *Forfarshire* occurred. She ran aground on one of the group to the north of Longstone. Nine of the passengers managed to reach shore in a ship's boat, and at dawn the next day, in spite of heavy seas, Grace and her father rowed across the dangerous sound to rescue eight others. Forty-three people were drowned.

Grace became a national heroine, but it was soon discovered that she had consumption. She went to live on the mainland, but she died when she was twenty-six, and was buried at Bamburgh.

¹ See Chapter IX.

The Farne Islands were bought for the National Trust by public subscription in 1925. They may be visited by the public at various times, the end of May or the beginning of June being the best seasons. About twenty species of birds nest there.

On the mainland just south of Holy Island and the Farne Islands stands BAMBURGH CASTLE, famous in legend as the castle to which Sir Lancelot carried off Queen Guinever, leaving King Arthur¹ to lament that he could find another Queen, but never another Lancelot!¹ Besides the pleasures of illicit romance, Bamburgh has known war and siege, and during the Wars of the Roses withstood a siege by the ferocious Margaret of Anjou, although at one time the garrison had only one herring to eat between them for five days!

The castle is now let off in flats! And this in spite of the croaking and bewitched frog at the bottom of the ancient well within the castle itself. It was perhaps about the time of the Conqueror (when Bamburgh, Durham, and York were the only cities in the north) that a Princess of Bamburgh was turned by her wicked stepmother into one of those revolting creatures a "Laidley Worm." The Princess's brother, away at the wars, heard the dread news and hurried home. As he knew a spell or two himself, he soon rescued the maiden, transformed her back into her own beautiful human form, and retaliated by turning the stepmother into a frog. To this very day she is said to be croaking at the bottom of that ancient well.

Farther south again, past the gory Alnwick Castle of the Percy's, is WALLINGTON HALL,* one of the show places of England. It was given to the National Trust by Sir Charles Trevelyan in 1942—the largest Trust property in England. It embraces more than twenty farms, most of the town of Cambo, and a wide stretch of moorland, woods, and gardens of great beauty.

The house and gardens are open to the public frequently throughout the summer. The woods are always open, but visitors must keep to the paths.

Wallington Hall grounds have the first, and one of the most popular, of the Youth Hostels, established there by the Trevelyan family, who owned the property, one generation after another, since 1777. The yellow salon, with its eggshell-blue ceiling, once entertained Algernon Swinburne, who read his poems there to an audience of Trevelyan ladies. Swinburne was himself a Northumbrian.

Wallington Hall is very picturesque, a square stone house built on

¹ See Chapter III, under St Michael's Mount and Neighbouring Pleasures.

the lines of a French château. A daughter of one of the earlier owners, Julia Blackett, married the Yorkshireman Sir William Calverley, the original of Joseph Addison's "Sir Roger de Coverley." Addison achieved immortal fame through his development of "Sir Roger," who was a member of an imaginary club which supposedly edited *The Spectator*—in reality edited by Addison and his friend Sir Richard Steele. Sir Richard actually invented "Sir Roger," but it was Addison who rounded him out into a life-sized character.

A few miles south of Wallington Hall is BELSAY CASTLE*, a three-in-one 'stately home' which is open to the public every weekday afternoon.

The three parts of Belsay are the ruined fourteenth-century castle, the Jacobite residential wing which was added in the seventeenth century, and the New Castle, built between 1810 and 1817. This New Castle is really a beautiful Greek mansion designed by Sir Charles Monck (Middleton) while on his honeymoon in Athens, where he was enthralled by the beauties of Grecian architecture. Sir Charles brought workmen from Italy to build the mansion, which stands in a park containing magnificent trees and a lovely little lake.

The ruins of the fourteenth-century Old Castle contain a square tower of yellow stone with four corner turrets—three round, one square. It is considered to be the finest tower of its kind in the north, and has been carefully preserved by the Middleton family.

The Belsay estate has descended from one Middleton to another in the male line ever since the thirteenth century. They are the only Northumbrian family to achieve such a record. The property was alienated temporarily in the fourteenth century, however, when Sir Gilbert Middleton got into trouble for seizing two cardinals and holding them to ransom, as well as the Bishop-elect of Durham, whom they had gone north to induct.

The property is now owned by Sir Stephen Middleton, Bart.

Between Belsay and the coast stands SEATON DELAVAL*, the "master-piece" of Sir John Vanbrugh, designer of Blenheim Palace¹ for the Duke of Marlborough. This romantic shell of a building dominates the dismal coalfields of Northumberland, and the approaching road is criss-crossed with drab railway-lines and strings of coal-trucks. But there is still glory and magnificence about the mansion, though the glory is crumbling and the magnificence decaying. In 1822 Seaton Delaval was gutted by a fire caused through jackdaws nesting in the

¹ See Chapter VIII.

neglected chimneys. The house has not been lived in since, but it has been re-roofed and partially restored, and is open to the public several days a week between May and September.

The huge stables—the largest in England—are still intact, though now swallows flit through them, and the mansion contains some magnificent wrought-iron work, an interesting collection of Royal Seals, and the famous “Gay Delavals” portraits by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

The “Gay Delavals,” who were beautiful and wild as well as gay, were a byword in the eighteenth century—a source of gossip, delight, and probably envy for their happy exhibitionism and general flamboyance. One adventure was the hiring of Drury Lane Theatre for a family production of *Othello*. They were evidently regarded as being well worth seeing, for the House of Commons adjourned early that day so that Members might attend!

Seaton Delaval was begun in 1720 for Admiral Delaval, descended from a soldier who had come originally from Laval, in the South of France, and fought with William at the Battle of Hastings. Admiral Delaval died before he could enjoy the “masterpiece” Vanbrugh built for him, being killed by a fall from his horse before the mansion was completed.

He was succeeded by his nephew Francis, about whom there is a pleasant story of a soothsayer’s prophecy coming true (if only the dates given were a little more obliging).

Francis completed the building of the mansion by 1728, and a soothsayer predicted that by the next generation there would be no male heir to inherit the property. The prophecy cannot have worried Francis much at the time; he had eight sons and five daughters. But when he died in 1771, at the age of forty-eight all his children had pre-deceased him. The property was inherited by his brother John, whose only son was killed in some skirmish with a dairymaid. On John’s death the property went to another brother—and finally to the Astley family, who own it to this day.

The trouble with this story is that if the dates are correct Francis must have been a mere five-year-old at the time he finished building the mansion!

From NEWCASTLE comes a strange and fascinating tale—the tale of Joaney Reed, parish clerk of one of the villages near by. One night when he was returning home to his cottage he met nine cats sitting by the roadside. One of them called to him, saying, “Joaney Reed, Joaney Reed, tell Dan Ratcliffe that Peg Powson is dead!” Joaney hurried

home, thoroughly mystified, and told his wife of this strange occurrence, for he knew no Dan Ratcliffe. But as he was telling the tale their cat jumped off the hearth and cried, "If Peg Powson is dead, it's no time for me to be here"—and disappeared out of the window!

An even stranger story with a similar theme comes from Scotland. There a man who had lost his way in the mist saw a light glowing in the distance. The light disappeared as he approached it, and the man found himself standing beside an old oak. Having nowhere else to go, the wanderer climbed the tree, intending to spend the night there, but what was his amazement to find that the whole of the inside of the tree was ablaze with light! He looked far down into the very roots of the oak, and there, lying in state, as it were, he saw a coffin surrounded by cats, all of them bearing flaming torches.

The next day, scarcely believing his adventure, the traveller made his way to a friend's house, and soon his strange experience was bubbling out of him. As he told the story he noticed that the dogs sleeping round the fire went on sleeping. But the cat woke up and listened to every word. When the man told his friend, "I saw a crown and sceptre on the coffin," the cat cried, "Then old Peter's dead, and I'm the King of the Cats." He sprang up the chimney and was never seen again!

Well across Northumberland from Newcastle, but still near the old Roman wall, is HALTWHISTLE, which stands in the very centre of a wonderful series of 'haunts'! Haltwhistle was the scene of scores—possibly hundreds—of Border 'incidents,' and, though such skirmishes might be expected to leave ghosts behind them, the ghosts actually seen in the district seem to have no connexion with such things as Border history. For instance, an entire hunt has been seen galloping past on their shadowy mounts at Pinkies Cleugh, and there is a treasure-digging dwarf at Thirlwall Castle, near by. When the castle was being built by the Thirlwalls in the thirteenth century, they used a quarry handy to their needs—the old Roman wall. But when the castle was left untenanted in the seventeenth century other people had something of the same idea, and cottagers began taking stones away from the castle to build more cottages and walls. Eventually one side of the old castle toppled into the Tipalt. What is left is still a fine old ruin—and a source of constant interest to the ghostly dwarf, for ever digging for a lost fortune.

Not far away stands Blenkinsop Hall, a castellated mansion surrounded by fine parklands—and haunted by a nameless lady in white. Blenkinsop Castle, two miles farther on—and, like Thirlwall Castle,

built of stone 'quarried' from the Roman Wall—is haunted by a nameless man in grey.

Six miles south of Newcastle, near Sunderland, is WASHINGTON, which has been connected with the Washington¹ family since the twelfth century (when the name was spelt Wessington). Washington Old Hall, which dates mainly from the seventeenth century, embodies part of the earliest home of the Washingtons, from whom the first President of the United States was descended.

The school at Washington in County Durham has exchanged several Union Jacks for several Stars and Stripes with schools in Washington, D.C.

Washington in Sussex does not seem to be connected with the famous family, but there are countless other connexions in England, including DURHAM, where, in 1945, a plaque was unveiled in honour of a Washington who was Prior of Durham in the fifteenth century.

Augustine Washington, the father of George Washington, married as his second wife Mary Ball, who with her mother had returned to BARKHAM, Berkshire, after her father's death in Virginia.

The Washington home at SULGRAVE, Northamptonshire, a small stone manor house bought by Lawrence Washington (who made a fortune out of wool), was restored to commemorate a hundred years of peace between England and the United States. Funds for its maintenance were raised by various organizations, including the Colonial Dames of America. The house is now managed by a board of trustees, including the United States Ambassador in London and the British Ambassador in Washington.

Many Washington relics in the old house include a saddlebag used by George during the War of Independence. The family arms—which show very plainly where the national emblems of the United States originated—are displayed over the porch of the old manor. They consist of three mullets (five pointed stars) above two bars (stripes) with an eagle with outstretched wings as the crest.

George Washington's grandfather John emigrated from TRING, Hertfordshire, to Bridges Creek, Virginia, in 1657—possibly because he held royalist sympathies, and by then Cromwell was in power. His father, Augustine, who had spent some time at sea, also settled in Bridges Creek with Mary Ball, his second wife. George was the eldest of her six children.

¹ See Chapters III (under Hengrave) and VIII.

Sir John Thynne, of Longleat, was a connexion with the double ghost story concerning two other Wiltshire houses, LITTLECOTE MANOR and CHARLTON PARK, the scene of a particularly revolting murder of a baby.

Littlecote, still a charming creeper-covered house, was built by the Darell family in the early sixteenth century, and apparently all went well till some ninety years later, when "Wicked Will" Darell inherited the manor in Elizabeth's reign. He was a tall, slender man, "havage upon hym a gonne of black velvett" at the time he committed his frightful crime.

One dark night the village midwife, Mrs Barnes, was awakened after a hard day's work by a banging and a knocking. As she opened the door to ask what the trouble was a man's hand was thrust out of the darkness, extinguishing her candle and drawing her into the road. The man, in sinister tones, bade her make haste, and after helping her on to his horse rode off into the night with the alarmed woman. But Mrs Barnes, in spite of her anxiety, was determined to remember every incident. She made a mental note of the cobbles as she was lifted off the horse before a large darkened mansion, and, though she was blindfolded before being taken upstairs, she counted the stairs, and later snipped a piece of material out of the curtains round the big four-poster.

Mrs Barnes assisted at the birth of a boy—but just as the baby was born he was snatched out of her hands by "the naughty and ferocious" Will and foully done to death. Mrs Barnes was given twenty-five guineas and taken home, but she was so distressed by what she had seen that she hurried off to tell her story to a magistrate. Suspicion immediately fell on "Wicked Will" Darell, and Charlton Park, where his mistress lived, was identified by the cobbled courtyard, the number of stairs in the staircase (there were twenty-two), and by the piece of brocade which Mrs Barnes had cut from the bed-curtains. Darell was tried for murder at Salisbury, but he was acquitted, though public feeling ran high against him. Some said he bribed the Attorney-General, Sir John Popham, with the promise of Littlecote.

"Wicked Will" died in 1598, and legend says he was haunted to death by the ghost of the Burning Babe. The little ghost appeared suddenly on the road near Littlecote, and so terrified Darell's horse that it threw him, and he broke his neck.

[Now he himself is said to haunt Charlton Park (the seat of the Earls of Suffolk), and wherever he walks in that fatal bedroom the floor crumbles away! His uneasy ghost is also said to drive a coach up to Littlecote whenever the heir is about to die.

In 1861 Francis Popham's little son was seriously ill, and his nurse sent for the child's parents, who were away from home. Later that night she heard a coach drive up to the front door, and she waited, expecting every moment to see the parents walk into the sick-room. When they did not appear, and there was no sound, the nurse looked out on to the drive, brilliantly clear in the moonlight.

There was nothing there.

By the following day, when the boy's parents arrived, he was already dead.

As recently as 1879 a letter was found at Longleat dated 1578-9—about the time of Mrs Barnes's adventure—asking Sir John Thynne to inquire from a Mr Bonham, who was also at Longleat at that time, as to the welfare of his sister, who was "Wicked Will's" mistress. He was urged to "enquire of his sister touching her usage of Will. Darell's, the birth of her children, how many there were and what became of them; for that the report of the murder of one of them was increasing foully, and would touch Will. Darell to the quick."

Charles II and William III both visited Littlecote. No doubt they both inspected the blue-furnished bedroom with its patched bed-curtains.

DRAYCOTT FARM, a little south of Charlton Park, near Chippenham, is also connected with Sir John Thynne, of Longleat, for his daughter Catherine married Sir Walter Long, of Draycott, as his second wife. Sir Walter already had one son, John, whom he disliked for his idle ways and propensity for gambling and frivolity. Catherine and her brother encouraged John in his loose ways—and then told tales to his father, who declared he would disinherit him. Shortly after his vow Sir Walter lay dying. Sir Egremont Thynne stood over him, making him draw up a new will, and a clerk was called in to engrave it. Engrossing needs an excellent light, and each time the clerk sat down to write a ghostly white hand appeared, casting a shadow over his work. The clerk was so disturbed that he woke Sir Walter, and told him of the strange occurrence. He was so convinced that the hand was the hand of John's mother that he refused to have anything to do with the engraving of the new will. Another clerk was called in, and he engraved the will without more ado, but the first clerk's tale soon spread abroad, and was so firmly believed that John's friends rallied round him. They began a lawsuit against the new heir, Catherine's son. The result was a compromise, John inheriting part of the estates and his half-brother inheriting Draycott.

Draycott is still standing, still lived in, having been purchased about thirty years ago by the father of the present owner. During recent alterations a very old chimney corner of brick with a low beam across the front was discovered. The beam was only 4 ft. 6 in. from the floor, and, the owner said, he "could not visualize ourselves dodging under this beam to get warm, or more probably smoked." The old chimney corner was consequently closed up again and a modern fireplace built in. A freestone Tudor arch discovered at the same time was also bricked up. Although the house has been greatly altered at various times, the central part of the house, built of soft stone mixed with some of the local sarsen stones, is very old, and there are also some oak-studded doors of considerable age. Draycott village itself has always been famous for its strawberries.

STANTON DREW COURT, another fine old manor house, about six miles from Bristol, stands near the site of an old Druid place of worship. Long ago a newly married couple and their friends assembled on the spot one Saturday night for dancing and merrymaking. At midnight, as Saturday turned into Sunday, the piper laid down his pipes and declared he would pipe no more.

The bride was disappointed, and angry, for she was enjoying herself enormously, and, stamping her foot, she swore that she would have another piper even if she had to summon him from Hell. No sooner had she said this than a kindly old man appeared, and as he struck up a tune the dancing went on merrily once again. But the music grew faster and faster—and faster and faster twirled the dancers. They cried out for the piper to stop, but he only mocked them, and as dawn was breaking he turned the Sabbath-breakers into fourteen immense stones. They are still standing there, the fourteen stones, which are called "The Weddings" to this day.

There are three stone circles at Stanton Drew. "The Weddings" is the largest, measuring more than 300 ft. in diameter. The whole group makes a Stonehenge on a smaller scale, and the stones were possibly set up as long ago as the New Stone Age or the Bronze Age. Whatever the period—and reason—of their erection, the old Druid stones are always a great attraction for visitors, who still gaze with wonder on the stone bride and her thirteen Sabbath-breaking companions.

Stanton Drew Court has suffered the chequered career typical of so many fine old houses. Even in this century the house has changed hands many times. For a time it belonged to an Irish cattle-dealer. Then, during the Second World War, it became a school for mental patients evacuated from Hastings. The pupils unfortunately did a good deal of

damage both inside and out, but the fine old staircase in the Grand Hall is still well preserved.

After the war the Court was bought by a farmer, who enlarged his fields, kitchen garden, and lawns by enclosing the Court's grounds. Since then the Court has been sold twice. It now possesses only a front lawn and a small back garden.

III

Tudor Intrigue

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

EDWARD SEYMOUR, THE LORD PROTECTOR SOMERSET, one of the guardians of Edward VI, who was given SYON HOUSE* by his young nephew and master, who had no affection for him. He was unlucky enough to lose his head on Tower Hill. His successor at Syon House was another of Edward's guardians, and Somerset's rival, the ambitious, capable

JOHN DUDLEY, DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND, who later lost his own head on Tower Hill. After the rebellion to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne he and his wife and their five sons were all imprisoned in the Tower. One son, GUILDFORD DUDLEY, married to Lady Jane Grey, was also executed. But the son to watch is

ROBERT DUDLEY. In another chapter he becomes Elizabeth's favourite, the Earl of Leicester.

The bad luck attending Syon House was in evidence before Seymour's and Dudley's time, however, for

QUEEN KATHERINE HOWARD, the fifth wife of

HENRY VIII, was confined there for some months before her execution. Her companion at Syon—and on the scaffold—was the unpleasant

LADY ROCHFORD, who, perhaps, deserved all she got, for she had been the cause of her husband's downfall and execution. Lady Rochford was the sister-in-law of

ANNE BOLEYN, Henry VIII's second wife, and the wife of

GEORGE BOLEYN, LORD ROCHFORD, minor poet and courtier, both of whom were executed. Their ghosts are said to haunt BLICKLING HALL,* in Norfolk. Anne's also haunts HEVER CASTLE, in Kent, and is also said to haunt the Thames near Lambeth. As a small girl Anne and her elder sister,

MARY BOLEYN (later Henry VIII's mistress), at different times, spent some years at the French Court. Anne was sent over as a child attendant to Henry VIII's young sister,

MARY, who married the decrepit King Louis XII of France. On his death three months later Mary secretly married her old love,

CHARLES BRANDON, DUKE OF SUFFOLK, of HENHAM HOUSE, Suffolk, a boyhood friend of the King's, and a fine performer in the tiltyard. Henry's fury was boundless, and Mary and Charles had to purchase his favour with all Mary's dowry from the French King—and more. Their daughter

FRANCES married

HENRY GREY, of BRADGATE,* Leicestershire, who was created Duke of Suffolk on the death of Brandon's heir. His eldest daughter was

LADY JANE GREY, another royal resident of Syon House. It was there that she was persuaded to accept the throne, and from there she was taken to the Tower to await her Coronation. Instead execution awaited her, and her father. Her sisters

KATHERINE GREY, who married one of the sons of the Lord Protector Somerset, and

MARY GREY, who married Elizabeth's serjeant-porter, both incurred the Queen's wrath for marrying against her will and without her permission. They were both confined, Katherine in the Tower, Mary at CHEQUERS and other manors. Both of them died young.

Yet another Mary comes into this chapter, Henry VIII's daughter

QUEEN MARY, whom John Dudley tried to entice to London on the death of the boy King Edward. But Mary, guessing that mischief was afoot, fled from her manor at HUNSDON, in Hertfordshire, to HENGRAVE HALL and FRAMLINGHAM CASTLE,* in Suffolk, where her army rallied round her.

It was a time of plotting and peril on all sides, and within the space of a few years nine of the principal characters in this chapter had met a violent death—Edward Seymour; John Dudley and his son Guildford; Katherine Howard; Lady Rochfort; Anne Boleyn and her brother George; Lady Jane Grey and her father, the Duke of Suffolk. Three others died young—John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, of plague, and Katherine and Mary Grey.



III

For years there seemed to be a curse on the owners (and sometimes on the mere occupiers) of SYON.

It became Crown property at the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII. The Abbey of Syon, for both nuns and monks, had been founded in 1415 by Henry V to expiate the sins of his father, which were many, including connivance in the murder of Richard II. A later king, Edward IV, annexed the Priory of ST MICHAEL'S MOUNT,* off the Cornish coast, to Syon, thus forging a distant link between Guy Fawkes¹ and Jack the Giant-killer.

Perhaps in retaliation for the harsh treatment the Abbey received at the time of the Dissolution, when the nuns were forced to flee to the Continent, Henry VIII had a most unpleasant experience at Syon House, but, as he was dead by then, some of the personal effect was, of course, lost.

An unpleasant experience also befell his fifth wife, Queen Katherine Howard, for she was confined at Syon House for some months, knowing full well that it was only a matter of time before she shared the fate that had befallen Henry's second wife, Anne Boleyn. Like Anne, Katherine had been accused of unchastity, and, again like Anne, she was to lose her head on Tower Green. Her companion in imprisonment at Syon House, and at the scaffold, was Lady Rochfort, the unscrupulous, venomous wife of George Boleyn, Lord Rochfort, Anne's poet-ambassador brother. Lady Rochfort perhaps deserved her unpleasant fate, for it was largely on her evidence (generally believed to be false) that George was himself brought to execution on the charge that he had been his sister's lover.

Anne, George, and their elder sister, Mary, had spent their early years at BLICKLING HALL,* Norfolk. The original Hall had been bought by Sir Geoffrey Boleyn, a mercer, and Lord Mayor of London in 1457, from Sir John Fastolf. He was a knight who had fought valiantly at Agincourt; less valiantly against Joan of Arc, for he had run away from her. And he was probably the model Shakespeare used for that remarkable warrior Sir John

¹ See Chapters IV and IX.

Falstaff. Sir Geoffrey had also bought HEVER CASTLE, in Kent, where Henry, during his courtship of Anne, spent some of the happiest days of his life. He was very much in love. He would wind his bugle-horn as soon as he came in sight of the castle towers, and his little black-haired witch would twist another jewel into her blue-black hair, and wait for him with her tantalizing smile.

Anne's birthplace is uncertain. Blickling claims her, but so does Hever. But born she was, about 1507—for even the date is uncertain—and only seven years or so later she attended the sixteen-year-old Princess Mary (the King's sister) when she went to France reluctantly to marry the decrepit Louis XII.

The Boleyns, who were lively, not too pompous, and not so aristocratic as to regard Henry as an upstart (as many of the nobles did), were a family group in which Henry moved happily and at ease, lapping up their admiration, soothed by their flattery, and Anne's father soon became one of the favoured few. New ambitions grew with his new prestige, and, following the usual practice of the day for nobles' children, he sent Mary when she was nine to attend Margaret of Austria in Brussels, and later sent her to France as one of the hundreds of attendants on the seventeen-year-old Claude, bride of the Dauphin Francis.

So when Anne Boleyn went to the French Court with Princess Mary her older sister was already there, already only too willing to enjoy all the opportunities which presented themselves in that elegant, exciting, fabulous Court with its continual parade of elegant and exciting young men. Anne had more intelligence than Mary, but even had she wished she could hardly have escaped or ignored all the sensual frivolities of the French Court.

At first the little girl was too young to take much notice of the interchanging loves, and the quarrels and intrigues that were part of them all. But she grew up rapidly in that atmosphere of free-and-easy sophistication, and when Mary, the Queen of France, returned to England after the death of Louis, Anne stayed on as a protégée of the new young Queen Claude.

Long before her marriage with King Louis—already an old man at fifty-two—Henry's sister had fallen in love with Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, of HENHAM HOUSE. Henry promised that if she would first marry Louis she might, on his not unexpected death, marry whom her heart desired. On Louis' death Cardinal Wolsey sent Suffolk over to Paris, and there Mary, clinging to him in love and loneliness, dragooned him into

marrying her out of hand. Suffolk was deeply devoted to the young Dowager Queen, but he was afraid of what Henry might say, and he needed persuasion. But Mary was homesick—"very ill-diseased with tooth-ache"—and as determined as any Tudor. So she and Suffolk were married. Something like panic descended on Suffolk, and he wrote to Wolsey in frantic haste. "The Queen," he wrote, "would never let me be in rest till I had granted her to be married; and so to be plain with you, I have married her heartily, and have lain with her, in so much I fear me lest she be with child." To quote his own unorthodox spelling, he ended his letter, "I was lyke to be ondon if the matter schold coume to the knollag of the Kyng me Masster."

Suffolk had been quite right in his reading of Henry's reaction. He had since boyhood been a companion of Henry's, but neither friendship nor the promise to Mary affected Henry's attitude. He took the news "grievously and displeasantly," and it was only when Francis I of France had added his pleas to Wolsey's, Mary's, and Suffolk's that Henry relented. Even then his good humour had to be purchased by Suffolk's promising to hand over Mary's £200,000 dowry from Louis, as well as the gold plate and jewels he had given her, and an annual payment of £1,000 for twenty-four years. After that Henry managed to put a good face on the matter, and with pageantry and celebration had Suffolk and Mary married again, this time in the splendour of his presence at his palace at Greenwich.

Not long after their daughter Frances was born, later to become the mother of Lady Jane Grey, who was thus a cousin of Henry's three children—Mary, Elizabeth, and Edward VI.

While Suffolk and Mary were having their troubles Anne Boleyn was still a little girl at the French Court. By the time she returned to England when she was fifteen she was a provocative, lively girl, possessing skill on the lute and at dancing. Her sister Mary was already a married woman—and already the King's mistress.

Anne became a maid-of-honour to Catherine of Aragon, and attended all the Court festivities and frivolities as a matter of course. These included a feast of sumptuous splendour and luxury given by Wolsey in his Palace at Whitehall, and if the King took no particular attention of the lissom, lively, dark-haired girl that particular night there was one man at Court who could hardly take his eyes off her.

This was Henry Algernon Percy, heir to the fifth Earl of Northumberland, and a former page to Cardinal Wolsey, who bullied and tormented him. He was a highly strung man, sensitive—and very young—and he and Anne were soon desperately in love. But Wolsey, after a terrifying interview with the young man, whom he received in the great gallery of his palace, surrounded by ominously silent retainers, sent for Northumberland. He in turn berated his son, crying, "Thou has always been a proud, presumptuous, disdainful and a very unthrift waster." Henry was ordered to leave Court, never to see Anne again, and to marry Mary Talbot, daughter of the Earl of Shrewsbury, to whom he had been betrothed in childhood. It was a disastrously unhappy marriage. Within two years Mary had returned to her father, and hated her husband for ever. Percy's love for Anne, however, lasted to the end of his short life.

By a strange twist of fate it was Henry Algernon Percy whom Henry VIII sent to arrest his old master and tormentor, Cardinal Wolsey—a distasteful job¹ he carried out as decently as he could.

There was always great hostility between Wolsey and Anne Boleyn, perhaps primarily because of his interference in her love-affair with young Percy. He always called her the "Night Crow." He should have called her a mocking-bird, for she was an impudent girl, full of dark mischief, with bewitching and beautiful black eyes, and vitality that shone like a star. Her slender young body and her gaiety captured many a man's heart besides Henry Percy's and Henry the King's. But, though King Henry pursued her with relentless adoration, Anne kept him at arm's length for five years, declining to be seduced till she knew that she would become queen. By that time Henry had a new group of young courtiers around him, including Anne's brother George. They played dice with him, hunted, hawked, rode, and held archery contests. They were his intimate companions.

Four of them were to lose their hearts to Anne. Five were to lose their heads. Only one managed to lose his heart and keep his head. That was Sir Thomas Wyatt, her cousin, of ALLINGTON CASTLE,^{2*} near her old home of Hever. He was a poet, handsome, arrogant, passionate; but more fortunate than the rest.

The beginning of the end for Anne was her miscarriage. One of the courtiers burst into her apartments crying that the King had been thrown so heavily from his horse that his companions had

¹ See Chapter V.

² Ibid.

feared at first that he was dead. Four days later Anne miscarried. The dead child was a boy, and the King, almost out of his mind with frustration, cried out that he had been forced into his marriage with Anne by sorcery, "That is why God will not permit me to have male children!"

He began to neglect Anne, and soon her "spies" brought her news of what was afoot.

Mark Smeaton, a pleasant young musician of no family, but with gifts as a dancer, was tortured into admitting adultery with Anne. A few days later Anne was arrested at Greenwich, and followed Smeaton to the Tower. Her brother George was there already, and already London was seething with stories of the Queen's escapades. One story told how Anne had called for Smeaton one morning when she was still abed, bidding him to play music for her ladies-in-waiting to dance. His pleasant charm won her heart, and she determined to have him for her own. She enlisted the aid of an old serving-woman, who smuggled him into the antechamber and hid him in a cupboard where the Queen kept a supply of sweetmeats, conserve, and candied fruits. When the coast was clear the Queen called out, "Margaret, bring me a little marmalade!" And the old woman led Smeaton into the Queen's chamber, saying, "Here is your marmalade, ma'am"—and left the two indiscreet young people together.

London was buzzing with gossip, and no one was surprised when Anne was charged with adultery not only with Smeaton, but with three of Henry's intimates, and, finally, of incest with her brother.

This information was supplied by Lady Rochfort, who for some time had been on bad terms with her husband. Her accusation was based solely on evidence that they had been alone together for several hours—at a time when Anne was far gone in pregnancy.

All the men were executed, Mark Smeaton making a bad job worse when he addressed the crowd from the scaffold.

"Masters," he cried, "I pray you all pray for me, for I have deserved the death!"

Anne herself went to the scaffold with an almost gay courage, jesting that history would have no difficulty in finding a nickname for her. "They will call me," she said, "*la royne Anne sans-têtel*!"

As the news reached Blickling Hall of the execution of George and Anne Boleyn four headless horses were seen careering across

the countryside with a headless man dragging behind them. He carried his head under his arm, and people brave enough to glance at the apparition noticed that his hair was tangled, and matted with blood. Even now the ghostly journey is repeated from time to time, the horses galloping across hedges and ditches and finding no peace till they have crossed twelve bridges.

Anne herself haunts the roads near Blickling Hall. On the anniversary of her death (May 19) she drives up the avenue leading to the Hall in a coach drawn by headless horses. She holds her head upon her knee, but she, her head, the coach, and horses all vanish into air as the Hall is reached. Sometimes, headless still, she is seen driving recklessly along the Norfolk roads, pursued by an eerie blue light. Anne had been found guilty of adultery by Archbishop Cranmer in the undercroft of Lambeth Palace. She was taken from the palace to the Tower by water . . . and the shadowy form of the young Queen's barge is still sometimes seen bearing her and the shadowy oarsmen across the river.

Anne Boleyn went to her execution in a loose robe of grey damask over an underskirt of red, wearing a pearl-embroidered hood over her blue-black hair. The date was May 19, 1536. She went to her death with a flushed face, but with shining eyes and a jest on her lips. And just six years later one of her successors, Queen Katherine Howard, and one of her accusers, Lady Rochfort, were taken from Syon House to the Tower to meet their death with equal courage. They both "made the most godly and christyan's end, that ever was hard tell of (I thinke) sins the world's creation."

Katherine Howard, Henry's "rose without a thorn," was Anne Boleyn's cousin. She had had a wild upbringing, not in the hot-house, sensual atmosphere of the French Court, such as Mary and Anne had experienced, but in an undisciplined house supposedly governed by her grandmother, the old Duchess of Norfolk. Katherine was the daughter of Lord Edmund Howard and Jocosa Culpepper, of Kent, and a granddaughter of Thomas Howard, second Duke of Norfolk. But, as her father was very poor, she was brought up mainly by Agnes, the second Duke's old widow, who slept through most of the mischief that went on. The house was full of young girls, but at night, after the old lady had gone to bed, Katherine, with a stolen key, would unlock the restraining door of the gentlewomen's chamber, and allow all the young men of the household to troop in. There was a good deal of promiscuous, adolescent love-making, and Katherine had her first

taste of it when she was thirteen, having a swiftly terminated flirtation with a young man brought in to teach her to play the spinet.

Slightly more mature for this adventure, which had earned the young man dismissal, and herself a box on the ears, Katherine went a good deal further with her next young lover, Francis Dereham, and it was not long before they, like many another in the same household, were making love between the sheets. The young spinet-teacher, who was a tell-tale as well as a flirt, dropped a hint to the Duchess, and she swooped on the gentlewomen's chamber. She discovered a good deal to shock and alarm her. Katherine was cuffed again, and Francis Dereham, sent about his business, went off to Ireland to relieve his feelings with a career of piracy.

But when the King began making inquiries the Howards declared that Katherine, who was a strong, sweet-natured girl, was as pure as she was beautiful. After they were married—he an already decaying forty-nine, she still in her teens—he found magic in her every glance, in her every touch, in her plump prettiness; most of all in the quick vitality of her youth. But it was not long before Katherine was finding her magic elsewhere, with her cousin Thomas Culpepper.

Thomas had been at Court since a boy, sleeping in Henry's room, treating the fistula on his leg, and being nurse, page-boy, and companion. Now he, like Katherine, had a new interest. They tried to be secret and discreet, and the unpleasant Lady Rochfort aided them by smuggling them into her apartments for private meetings. But the liaison never was a secret. From the very beginning Katherine's ladies chatted and gossiped.

It was not the Culpepper affair that was the first cause of the final disaster. An old servant of the Duchess of Norfolk chatted about the promiscuous, undisciplined life that had gone on under the ageing, unseeing eyes of the Duchess. Cranmer came to hear about it, and one day he wrote out the story and slipped it to the King, "for he had not the heart to tell him by mouth."

The King wept.

Dereham was sent to the Tower, and then, as Katherine was hoping against hope, somehow the story of her love for Culpepper reached Cranmer too. Now both Katherine and Culpepper were arrested. Both the men were hanged at Tyburn, with all the attendant revolting embellishments, and Katherine was sent to Syon House with Lady Rochfort, who had managed to worm her

way into Court favour in spite of the sordid part she had played in the downfall of her husband.

Katherine, who soon recovered her youthful spirits at Syon House, though she knew well enough there could be no reprieve, found the journey to the Tower an almost overwhelming ordeal. She was given a few days' grace to regain her composure, and when the time came she managed to cry from the scaffold, "I die a Queen, but I would rather die the wife of Culpepper!"

The next royal adventure at Syon House was the dead Henry's own.

After his death in 1547 Henry's body was taken from Westminster to Windsor, and it rested overnight at Syon House, which he had despoiled and appropriated for his own use. Some years previously a Franciscan friar named Peto, with what can only be described as reckless courage, preached before the King declaring "that God's judgements were ready to fall upon his head . . . and that the dogs would lick his blood, as they had Ahab's."

During the night at Syon House Henry's coffin lay on a trestle. It burst open—and dogs snuffled forward and licked his blood. Syon House was not a lucky house.

Before Henry died he appointed sixteen regents to govern the country during the minority of his young son, Edward VI. The two most powerful regents were Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, and John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland. Somerset, the boy's uncle, made himself dictator, with the title of Lord Protector Somerset, but Dudley demanded rich rewards for agreeing, including Warwick Castle—and rich sinecures—and bided his time.

(John Dudley was no relation to the Percys, the name always associated with the honours of Northumberland. But at the time Edward created Dudley—or Dudley created himself—Duke of Northumberland the Percys were in disgrace, and the title had lapsed.)

Progress at Court, and, indeed, life itself, was more often than not at that time a question of "the devil take the hindmost," and Dudley wasted no time, when the chance came, to bring about Somerset's downfall. The young King never had any affection for his cold, stern uncle, and Dudley, a far more capable but infinitely less desirable man than his rival, wooed the small boy in secret from the beginning of his reign. Almost at once he began sending

him pocket-money, which naturally delighted the child, who scrawled his thanks—and demands for more—on scraps of paper to be sent to Dudley in equal secrecy. Another thing—Dudley was considered the best soldier in England, a fine, showy man who would naturally appeal to any small boy's imagination.

Before long Dudley was plotting more or less openly against Somerset. Muffled men slipped in and out of his house like the messengers and conspirators they were, and when the time was ripe Somerset was arrested on a charge of treason. He was sent to the Tower, and the inevitable happened. After his trial at Westminster Hall he "had his head cut off upon Towre Hill between 8 and 9 o'clock" one January morning, as the young King wrote in his diary.

Dudley, for the moment, was in the ascendant, and he became the next owner of Syon House.

John Dudley knew precisely how dangerous a game he was playing. Keeping one's head—in the literal sense—was a chancy business often enough under the Tudors, and John's own father had lost his when the boy was seven or eight.

The father, Edmund Dudley, had been a slick young lawyer of twenty-two when he had first been employed by Henry VII to make a fortune for him. He did it successfully, by reviving ancient penalties and obsolete laws, by packing juries and bribing judges to find flaws in land laws, and with skill and skulduggery he managed to transfer a very satisfactory amount of private property to the King. Henry VII was delighted, and, thanks to Edmund Dudley's flair for financial sharp practice, Henry VIII succeeded to a wealthy throne.

But the outcry against the detested Edmund was so bitter and noisy that Henry, his riches secure, decided that he might as well be beheaded—for the sake of peace—and beheaded he was. His property was confiscated, and his wife and sons impoverished. John Dudley was adopted by one of his father's partners in crime, Sir Edward Guildford, and brought up as the future husband of his little daughter Jane. Sir Edward naturally wanted a good match for his daughter, and he worked hard for the repeal of the attainder, and succeeded within two years. So, at the appropriate time, John and Jane were married. John was a "very comely person," and his appearance and his skill in the tiltyard endeared him to Henry VIII, and he and his family were installed at Court.

The Dudley fortunes were on the mend again.

John Dudley's five sons and two daughters were all alive at

the time he was condemned to death for his plot to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne. The sons were John (Earl of Warwick), Ambrose, Robert, Guildford, and Henry, the daughters Mary (Lady Sidney, the mother of the immortal Philip Sidney), and Catherine (Countess of Huntingdon).

Of these five sons Robert was the most interesting. He was born about the same time as Anne Boleyn's daughter Elizabeth, and from the earliest days of their childhood their lives were strangely, lovingly, despairingly, interwoven. They were brought up together for some years, and later Robert's younger brothers and sisters were brought up with Elizabeth's brother Edward. But before Elizabeth sat on the throne, and Robert had become her beloved Earl of Leicester, both she and Robert had storms and perils to negotiate, and both of them looked bleakly from the Tower—and thought they looked on death.

Syon House brought John Dudley, the new Duke of Northumberland, more bad luck than Somerset, for he lost his own head, and his wife and five sons were all imprisoned in the Tower. One of the sons, Guildford Dudley, was executed with his young wife, Lady Jane Grey. The others lived on, in peril—and in abject poverty. The Dudley fortunes had fallen again to zero.

It was John Dudley's overweening arrogance and ambition that brought him and his family to this pass. He forgot that he was merely the son of a financial crook, and treated the nobility as though they were the upstarts, not he. He so successfully devised Court appointments for his younger sons, and made himself so indispensable to the boy, that it was virtually impossible for anyone to see the King without seeing a Dudley.

But now, having plotted himself to supreme power, John Dudley began plotting himself to the scaffold.

Knowing how frail the boy King was, Dudley laid all his plans to be ready for instant action in the event of the boy's sudden death. He assembled ships in the Thames, strengthened the guards at the Tower, and secretly collected stores of arms and ammunition. He hastily married his son Guildford to Lady Jane Grey, a cousin of the King. The King was too ill to attend the wedding, though he sent the young couple a handsome present, and it was obvious that his strength was failing fast. He was probably in the last stages of consumption. Dudley, to give a legal veneer to his plots, persuaded the dying boy to set aside his father's instructions regarding inheritance to the throne, and to declare Mary and

Elizabeth illegitimate (which had happened to both of them before in their seesaw life of in and out of favouritism). Mary, Dudley declared, was too rabid a Roman Catholic. Illegitimacy would exclude her, but if she were declared illegitimate, then Elizabeth must be too. It was all too easy to persuade the boy that England needed the Protestant faith of Lady Jane Grey, and he made a will declaring her his heir.

Poor Lady Jane! Her childhood at BRADGATE HOUSE,* Leicestershire, where she was born in 1537, had been something of a trial, with parents who tweaked and pinched her for real or imaginary offences, and perhaps it was their treatment of the child that developed her strong streak of Tudor and Plantagenet obstinacy. She found great pleasure in learning, and when still a small child was deemed proficient in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, French, and Italian. Afterwards she wrote:

One of the greatest blessings that God gave me is that he sent me so sharp and severe parents and so gentle a schoolmaster, for when I am in the presence of either father or mother, whether I speak, keep silence, sit, stand, go, eat, drink, be merry, or sad (be sewing, playing, dancing, or doing anything else) I must do it, as it were, in such weight, measure and number, even so perfectly as God made the world, or else I am so sharply taunted, so cruelly threatened, yea presently with pricks, nips and bobs so out of measure disordered that I think myself in hell till the time comes that I must go to Mr Aylmer, who teaches me so gently, so pleasantly, and with such fair allurements to learning that I think all the time nothing while I am with him.

Let us hope that she found pleasure too in the company of her two little sisters, Katherine and Mary.

Bradgate House was built about 1500, and was one of the first large houses built for comfort without any thought of defence. And it was here that Jane and her sisters were brought up and lived with their mother, who was Henry VIII's niece, and their father, the Duke of Suffolk.

He was a fool as well as a knave, and his own stupidity led him irrevocably to the scaffold. (He was created Duke of Suffolk after the death of the second Brandon son in 1551. The plot to place Jane on the throne developed two years later.)

Suffolk was as ambitious for power as John Dudley, and not one half so capable. First of all, he schemed with the Lord Protector's brother, Admiral Seymour,¹ to marry Jane to the young

¹ See Chapter VIII, under Sizergh Castle.

King. In fact, Suffolk sold Jane to Seymour for £500 down, with the promise of another £500 to come. But that scheme came to nothing, and she was married to Guildford Dudley instead.

As the King lay dying Dudley sent for Princess Mary, but she refused the bait. Instead she made her way from HUNSDON, in Hertfordshire, first to HENGRAVE HALL and then to FRAMLINGHAM CASTLE,* in Suffolk. And as the King died Jane was summoned to Syon House, where Dudley and other nobles feasted her and courted her and persuaded her to accept the crown. One of the nobles, the Earl of Arundel, was already playing a double game, for, while he added his persuasions, he was sending warnings to Mary of what was afoot.

Jane was not quite sixteen, and in accepting the crown she too took the turning that led to the scaffold.

On her acceptance she was taken in State down the river to the Tower, according to custom, to prepare for the coronation she was never to achieve. She was shown the Crown jewels, and even the demure (if obstinate) young Jane must have been excited at handling so much beauty and glory. She was given the crown to try on. She hesitated a moment before placing it on her head, but there was no hesitation in her reply when told that there must be another crown for her husband. Never, cried Jane. Guildford Dudley would be a Duke, yes, but a king, no.

She and Guildford and his mother quarrelled bitterly and continuously, till Jane became ill with it all, and the Countess of Northumberland advised her furious son to leave Jane and return to Syon.

Meanwhile the news of Edward's death, which Dudley had kept a secret, had leaked out, and when heralds proclaimed Jane as the new Queen the proclamation was received in stony silence.

Dudley's son Robert had been sent to intercept Mary, but she had fled before him, and as the first leg of the plot went awry John Dudley's followers began to fall away, and nobles and their men flocked to Framlingham. Dudley collected cartloads of arms and a small army, and marched north "to fetch in Lady Mary," but feeling was swinging against him. Some of Mary's powerful sympathizers broke out of imprisonment in the Tower, and proclaimed Mary Queen amid much cap-flinging, cheering, and bell-ringing. Two of them, the Earl of Arundel and Lord Paget, rode off with their followers to join Mary. As they rode through London they passed impromptu feasts, spread out on trestle tables in the streets, surrounded by dancing and shouting and merrymaking, and by

the eternal din of the pealing bells. This was a reception very different from Jane's. Suffolk could read the signs as well as any, and, bidding his men lay down their arms, he himself proclaimed Mary as Queen from Tower Hill. Then, returning to the Tower, he tore down the royal canopy and trappings under which Jane was supping, and declared that such things were not for her.

Jane resigned her nine-day queenship and returned to Syon with the utmost relief. With the unending quarrel with Guildford and his mother in her mind, she must have regarded everything about her reign with bitter regret and misery.

John Dudley was captured by Arundel and Paget. He had made many enemies during his rise to power, and the general public who thronged the streets to witness his disgrace flung both insults and stones as he rode past in custody. He was sent to the Tower. So was his son Robert. So were his other sons, John, Earl of Warwick, Ambrose, Guildford and Henry. So was his wife. So was the Duke of Suffolk. So was Jane.

Dudley was executed on Tower Hill. All his scheming and plotting had gone for naught. He lost his head, whining, groveling for mercy, cutting a sorry figure on an occasion long graced by courage and nobility.

Lady Jane, Guildford, and Ambrose Dudley were tried at Guildhall and found guilty.

Very likely Mary would have spared Jane's life had not her father involved himself in the rebellion of Sir Thomas Wyatt in January 1554, but Suffolk was becoming something of a nuisance. Guildford Dudley was executed on Tower Hill that same month, Jane watching the melancholy procession as it left Beauchamp Tower¹ and came back with his body in a cart. She was executed later the same day, her father a few days later.

Ambrose Dudley was put on one side for further consideration, like John, Earl of Warwick, who had been tried and found guilty at the same time as his father. For some reason Robert was tried separately. He too was found guilty. He too was left in the Tower, never sure that each day was not his last. Henry, the youngest son, was released with his mother, a pathetic, courageous widow whom enemies had stripped of everything—even her own “stuff, apparel, and silks”—in the moment of Dudley's fall. She hung round the outskirts of the Court, winning sympathy by her dauntless courage, and with the gifts she gave to the influential Spanish ladies from her pathetic little store of treasures. On the anniver-

¹ See Chapter IX. ²

sary of the brothers' imprisonment the summer scourge of "sweating sickness" broke out in the Tower. Five small Dudley brothers and sisters had already died of it, and when John, Earl of Warwick, went down with it too his mother renewed her pleas for the brothers' release.

This time her prayers were answered, but release came too late for John. He died three days later at PENSHURST,¹ his brother-in-law's home.

But the Tower had not finished with the Duke of Suffolk's family yet, for Katherine Grey's turn was to come a little later on.

Lady Katherine² was imprisoned by Elizabeth, when she was Queen, for daring to marry Edward Seymour, Lord Hertford, one of the sons of the Lord Protector Somerset, to whom she had long been attached. By an Act of 1536 it was treason for anyone of royal blood to marry without the sovereign's consent, and Katherine and Edward, despairing of ever obtaining the Queen's consent, married without it, secretly, in his rooms in Westminster. Elizabeth was furious when she discovered the marriage, which Katherine was forced to admit once she became noticeably pregnant. She was dispatched without ceremony to the Tower, and Hertford, who was in Paris at the time, ordered to return to England. He too was sent to the Tower.

The child was born in the Bell Tower,³ and christened Edward after the boy King, the ceremony taking place in the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula, where his two grandfathers (Somerset and Suffolk), his aunt (Lady Jane Grey), and his uncle and grand-uncle (Guildford and John Dudley) were all buried.

The Queen, who pursued Katherine with unrelenting hostility, ordered that Lord and Lady Hertford were to be allowed no contact whatsoever during their imprisonment. But they managed to outwit or bribe their guards, and once again Lady Hertford produced a child. This time the Queen was so furious that she arrested the Lieutenant of the Tower and flung him into prison himself. And to ensure that the Hertfords really were kept apart she released Lady Katherine in custody—but kept Lord Hertford a close prisoner. As for the children, she had them declared illegitimate.

Lady Katherine spent the last few years of her life shuttled about from one house to another, always in custody. Elizabeth would not contemplate giving her her freedom, for there were recurrent rumours of plots to place her on the throne. Philip of

¹ See Chapter V.

² See Chapter IX.

³ Ibid.

Spain had even threatened to kidnap her, marry her, and, with her at his side, oust the "illegitimate" Elizabeth.

Lady Katherine died four years after her release from the Tower. Her husband remained a prisoner for some time. Once free, however, he never rested till he had won a legitimacy case for his two children, a claim made difficult by his being unable to find the priest who had married him so secretly to Katherine Grey.

Lady Mary Grey incurred Elizabeth's wrath for the same reason—a secret marriage. Lady Mary had been kept at Court under Elizabeth's watchful eye, but apparently all the Grey daughters were obstinate, for she too managed to marry the man she loved. The disparity in the ages, and sizes, and social position, of bride and groom probably moved Elizabeth to some rude comments, for Thomas Keys, a widower with several children, had already been at Court twenty-two years when Mary married him. He was Elizabeth's serjeant-porter, and, as his job required, a huge man. Mary was scarcely taller than a dwarf.

As soon as Elizabeth discovered this latest secret marriage, Mary was sent in disgrace first to CHEQUERS, and then to live in the custody of Sir Thomas Gresham.¹ Thomas Keys was sent to the Fleet prison, and died three years after his release.

Elizabeth still felt so hostile to Mary that Gresham had to seek special permission for the little widow to wear mourning for the husband she had known so briefly. She was eventually allowed her freedom, and cherished all her husband's children till she died in London in 1578.

So, in a space of a few years, father and three daughters were all dead—the Duke of Suffolk and his daughters, Jane, Katherine, and Mary.

SINCE THEN

It was in Elizabeth's reign that the Percys came into possession of SYON HOUSE, for she granted Henry Percy, the ninth Earl of Northumberland, a lease of the estate.

It was not much luckier for him than it was for Somerset or Dudley. Percy did not lose his head (in any respect), but he lost sixteen years of his life in imprisonment in the Tower, as well as being fined the colossal and unreasonable sum of £30,000.

Henry Percy,² the ninth Earl, was a kinsman of Thomas Percy,³ an ardent Roman Catholic, and one of the Gunpowder Plotters. Thomas

¹ See Chapter II.

² See Chapters IV and IX.

³ See Chapter IV.

was Henry's agent for his northern estates, and on November 4, 1605, he was dining at Syon House with his distinguished relative. During dinner a messenger clattered into the courtyard asking to speak to Thomas. He excused himself and hurried outside. Without more ado he mounted a horse himself and set off for London—and the execution of the Plot.

The messenger was Guy Fawkes.¹

As soon as the Plot was discovered the Earl, though ignorant of any part of it, was thrown into the Tower. He had for a long time been a thorn in the flesh of Robert Cecil (the great Burghley's hunchback son), and it was too good an opportunity for the Secretary of State to miss.

King James shared Robert Cecil's unconcealed dislike of Henry Percy, and in spite of the Queen's kind and constant pleas on his behalf, nothing would prevail on James to release him. In the Tower he continued his mathematical and scientific work, helped by three salaried assistants, known as "Percy's three magi." His daughter complicated matters by falling in love with James Hay, afterwards Earl of Carlisle, whom Percy loathed and despised as one of James's favourites. She married him, however, and Hay worked hard for Percy's release. When the release was granted Percy was so furious at being beholden to a man like Hay that he refused to leave, and he had to be coaxed out! He drove straight off to Bath, for his health's sake, demanding, when he saw the Duke of Buckingham's coach and six, that he be provided with a coach and *eight*.

James Hay achieved notoriety in the course of his licentious career by spending the sum of £400,000—with nothing whatever to show for it.

Syon House, which is still owned by the Duke of Northumberland, is open to the public several days a week between April and October.

The plain squareness of the building, which stands in a large garden on the banks of the Thames, gives no indication of the splendour of the interior. The characteristic Percy lion, the one with the straight-out tail which once graced Northumberland House in Trafalgar Square, now stands at Syon House. The same family crest is used as ornamentation on the handsome family coach now in the old stables. Many of the rooms are magnificent, and the Red Drawing-room, with its wonderful ornate medallion ceiling, possesses a fine collection of Stuart portraits, including Charles I (who used to ride over to Syon to see his children during one period of his imprisonment), his sister Elizabeth, his sons Charles II and James II, and his daughter Henrietta, always called "Minette."

¹ See Chapter IV.

A large and handsome cope from Syon Abbey is now at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. It is an early-fourteenth-century work, of gold and silk embroidered on linen. The colours are mainly gold, green, and white on a light-brown background, and the design shows scenes from the life of Christ, the Virgin with St Michael, the Apostles, and the seraphim.

ST MICHAEL'S MOUNT,* on which stood the priory once annexed to Syon, makes a magnificent setting for one of the heroic adventures of Jack the Giant-killer, the great traditional English hero. Jack was a Cornishman who lived during King Arthur's reign. He killed many giants in his time, one of them being Cormoran, who was eighteen feet tall and three yards about the waist. He thought nothing of carrying half a dozen oxen slung over his shoulders at once, and as for sheep and pigs, he would tie them round his waist like tallow dips. This giant Cormoran lived in a cave on St Michael's Mount, and perhaps it was in that splendid solitude that he composed the delightful anticipatory poem which so soon became world-famous:

Fee fi, fo, fum!
I smell the blood of an Englishman!
Be he alive or be he dead,
I'll grind his bones to make me bread!

As Jack heard Cormoran utter this fearful poem he cried out, "You'll have to catch me first!" He sped down the steep steps leading from the summit of the Mount, and jumped nimbly over the well that is still to be seen. The giant pursued him in terrible anger, but he put his foot into the well and crashed to the ground so heavily that the very Mount quivered to its foundations. Jack spun round, and, drawing his faithful sword, sliced off the giant's head while he was still struggling to regain his feet.

After Jack had killed Cormoran, and Blunderbore, who lived in an enchanted castle in a lonely wood near Wales, and Thurderell, the dreadful two-headed giant, he was made a Knight of the Round Table. He became tutor and servant to King Arthur's only son—an appointment which came about in a strange way.

The young Prince had ridden forth to seek his fortune in Wales, riding one horse and leading another laden with money. Before long he came to a market town, and there he saw a great crowd of people, all of whom were abusing a corpse! When he inquired what it was all about he found that the man had died owing a lot of money, and, as a punishment, the townsfolk had decided not to bury him. The young Prince was shocked and cried, "Go and bury him, and let his creditors

come to my lodging, and there shall their debts be paid." And the townsfolk came in such great numbers that soon the Prince had nothing left for himself at all.

Jack the Giant-killer had ridden into the town just behind the young Prince, and he had heard all that had occurred. He was so taken with the lad's generosity that he asked if he might become his servant. The Prince readily agreed, and afterwards they had many adventures together, until at last Jack, with the blessing of King Arthur himself, married a duke's daughter whom he rescued from a giant's enchantment.

St Michael's Mount is a romantic rock, bold and picturesque, and it was dedicated to St Michael when he appeared there in a vision to some fishermen in the year 495. Edward the Confessor founded a Benedictine monastery there, but by the Middle Ages, the Mount was used jointly for ecclesiastical and military purposes. It has, of course, figured in many sieges and battles. One of the dramas of the Mount concerned Henry de Pomeroy, of Berry Pomeroy Castle, on the mainland, seven miles from Torquay. He was a staunch supporter of bad King John against his brother, Richard I. He was forced to flee from Berry Pomeroy, and took refuge on St Michael's Mount, where he held out till all hope was gone. Capture and death at the hands of the executioner would have meant the confiscation of his estates, so Henry called in his surgeon and had himself bled to death.

The Mount held out for the King in the Civil War, with troops under the command of Sir Francis Bassett. He was forced to surrender, but he was able to impose a condition—that he and the garrison should be allowed to take ship for the Scilly Isles. After the Restoration Charles II gave the Mount back to the Bassett family, but they were too impoverished to maintain it, and they sold it to Sir John St Aubyn, whose descendants still possess it.

St Michael's Mount is crowned with a medley of towers and gables, gracefully shaped into a cone, the whole silhouette being charming and picturesque. With sea-views in every direction, and winding, precipitous paths, St Michael's Mount is a unique home. It is open to the public every Wednesday and Friday, all the year round, and on Mondays as well during the summer. The Mount now belongs to the National Trust.

BLICKLING HALL,* in Norfolk, is a fine rose-red brick mansion built between 1616 and 1628, and standing on the moated side of the Blickling Hall of the Boleyns. It was built for Sir Henry Hobart, whose descendant, the eleventh Marquis of Lothian, gave it to the National Trust

when he died in 1940. He was Ambassador to the United States of America at the time of his death.

The old Jacobean house was extensively altered in the late eighteenth century, but the beautiful staircase and plaster ceilings are still as they were. The hall is surrounded by gardens, and by an estate of more than 4500 acres, which includes a deer-park, woods, and farms.

The State Rooms and the gardens are both open to the public two days a week between May and September.

Blickling Hall is at present leased by the Trust to Mr Somerset de Chair, former Conservative M.P. for South Paddington. He recently sold his sixteenth-century manor, TRERICE,* near Newquay, to the Trust, and it is now open to the public. Trerice is an Elizabethan gem.

HEVER CASTLE, where Henry used to visit the Boleyn family, and then Mary in particular, and finally Anne, remained in the Boleyn family for four generations. Many alterations took place during that time, but though buildings on three sides of the court were converted into living-rooms, the keep was left untouched.

Sir Thomas Boleyn continued to live at Hever after Anne's death, with, perhaps, a nagging conscience, for he had cringed so low as to offer to go on the jury to try her. On his death Henry bought Hever from Mary Boleyn, whose son, known as Henry Carey, was generally supposed to be Henry VIII's son. Anne of Cleves owned Hever for a time, and after that it changed hands several times till in 1903 the castle and the surrounding property was bought by the first Viscount Astor,¹ of the present owner's family.

The problem of enlarging the castle to accommodate guests without destroying its old and seasoned beauty was solved by building a "village" of Tudor cottages, all of which connect with a corridor which leads by a covered bridge over the moat to the castle itself.

The gardens are lovely. Anne Boleyn's Oak, under which Henry courted her so many years ago, is still standing, a venerable old warrior, while the Rose Garden includes a delightful flight of fancy and topiary—an elaborate set of chessmen in golden yew.

The castle has always been—and still is—a private residence.

There is a story that Anne's ghost crosses the Eden to Hever Castle every Christmas-time.

HENHAM HOUSE, in Suffolk, was one of the properties given to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, by Henry VIII, his young wife's brother.

¹ See Chapter I, under Cliveden.

Charles, one of the most handsome and accomplished men at Court—especially in the tiltyard—was the son of William Brandon, Standard-bearer at Bosworth Field, who had been killed by King Richard himself. Charles and Mary had long been in love but he had to dispose of a wife—in fact, two wives—to clear a way for his marriage to the young Dowager Queen of France.

Even during her brief and unhappy marriage to Louis, Mary saw Charles constantly, for, besides being sent to Paris on State affairs, he took part in a tournament in Paris, carrying off the chief honours while Louis, fifty-two and decrepit, lay watching from a litter.

Henham House later came into the possession of the Rous family. In the garden stood an immense old hollow oak, which had been made into a summer-house with a cunningly concealed bark door. Here Sir John Rous, a Royalist fugitive, hid for several days while the Round-head soldiers searched for him. He was fed when and how she could by his beautiful and daring young wife. Later the tree became a rallying point for Jacobites, who used to gather there to drink to "the King across the water" with this toast:

God bless our King; God bless our land's defender;
God bless (no harm in blessing) the Pretender.
Who the Pretender is, and who is King
Is—God forgive us—quite another thing!

Henham Hall is now the seat of the Earl of Stradbroke. Though a 'stately home,' it is not one of those open to the public. The present Henham Hall replaces the old Hall, which was burnt down in 1773.

Frances Brandon, who was the daughter of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, and the former Princess Mary—the Frances Brandon who was afterwards the mother of Lady Jane Grey—was not born at Henham House, but at HATFIELD HOUSE*,¹ then owned by Henry VIII.

Henry VIII, who had acquired HUNSDON, in Hertfordshire, a mansion built of "stones called bricks," greatly enlarged and modernized it, and constantly visited it, especially when London was infested by the "sweating sickness." Mary, Elizabeth, and Edward all spent a good deal of their time at Hunsdon, and for Mary at any rate the manor was full of memories of drama and conflict. She lived there during Edward's brief reign, and fled from there to Framlingham when she suspected that Northumberland was trying to trick her into going to London.

When Elizabeth came to the throne she gave Hunsdon to Sir Henry Carey, a man many people suspected of being her half-brother. In any

¹ See Chapter V.

case, he was a kinsman, as he was Mary Boleyn's son. The Queen was always fond of Sir Henry Carey (later created Baron Hunsdon). He was fond of her, too, in his rough, soldierly way, and he sent her rich presents every year, though he complained to Burghley more than once that his salary was unpaid and his servants in want for food and clothing. Carey was one of the commission set up to try Mary Queen of Scots at FOTHERINGAY.¹ Later, when the Armada was expected, he commanded Elizabeth's personal bodyguard.

Sir Henry Carey left seven sons, the youngest, Sir Robert, achieving notoriety by setting out on the morning of Elizabeth's death, and, with relays of horses already arranged, arriving at King James's palace of Holyrood, in Edinburgh, two days later. He had spent sixty hours in the saddle. The feat won him no particular acclaim, for the rest of the Court felt that he was trying to make capital out of the death of his kinswoman and generous benefactress.

Lady Carey obtained a position in the Queen's household, and she and her husband were later given the care of the delicate little Prince Charles, and their daughter became a maid-of-honour to the little Princess Elizabeth.

Hunsdon remained in the Carey family for about a hundred years, when it was acquired by the Calverts. The eccentric Frances Calvert and her husband pulled down most of the old house, incorporating what was left into their mansion, which is still standing. The local residents viewed Frances with some alarm, not only because she was unorthodox enough to insist that the village cobbler should teach her how to make shoes, but also because she insisted on all her tenants being inoculated against smallpox, a novelty that was regarded with suspicion and terror.

When Mary decided to flee from Northumberland's summons to London she set out from Hunsdon at night with two women and six gentlemen of her household, riding on and on to HENGRAVE HALL, near Bury St Edmunds. The lovely old mansion, which stands in a garden set about with finely cut, tapering yew-trees and hedges, was built by Sir Thomas Kytson, a London merchant. Sir Thomas's sister Margaret married John Washington,² one of the ancestors of George Washington. His daughter Katherine married Sir John Spencer—the direct ancestor of Sir Winston Churchill.³

Hengrave Hall is now a school.

¹ See Chapter V.

² See Chapter II, under Washington, County Durham.

³ See Chapter VIII.

FRAMLINGHAM CASTLE* is now only a stately—but still magnificent—ruin, owned by the Master and Fellows of Pembroke College, Oxford (to whom it was bequeathed in 1636), and cared for under the Ancient Monuments Protection Act.

The immense outer walls of the castle still stand, forty-four feet high and eight feet thick, with thirteen square towers rising higher still. The ruins are open to the public, and it is not difficult to imagine the splendour of the scene as Mary's followers camped about the castle with their army of some 13,000 men. On the day that she rode out of the castle to review her troops Mary was greeted with such shouting and firing of arquebuses and throwing up of helmets that her terrified horse would do nothing but rear. Mary had to finish her review on foot—a small woman of thirty-seven, thin and reddish-haired, with a lovely complexion and a surprisingly loud, deep voice.

Less than a hundred years later the castle was demolished, but even now the old walls and towers constitute one of the finest and largest ruins in England.

Framlingham supplied the timber for Charles I's magnificent ship, the *Sovereign of the Seas*. It was at Woolwich in 1634 that the King detailed his plan for the *Sovereign* to the famous shipwright Phineas Pett, whose family had already been shipwrights for five generations. He himself had gained practical experience as a carpenter's mate aboard a privateer operating off the Barbary Coast, and he listened attentively as Charles talked of his plans. The *Sovereign*, of 1500 tons, and carrying 102 brass guns, was to be the greatest ship in the world. It was a great moment, for it was the first step towards England's bid for the supremacy of the seas. But it was a tragic moment too, for the building of the ship helped to bring about Charles's downfall and execution. His demand for Ship Money was one of the main causes of popular feeling swinging against him.

Nevertheless the *Sovereign of the Seas* was built, a beautiful seaworthy ship, beautifully ornamented with roses, crowns, thistles, harps and all the Signs of the Zodiac. In Charles II's day she was one of Prince Rupert's fleet, the best, he said, whether "riding or sailing." James II rechristened her the *Royal Sovereign*, and she ended a gallant career when she was destroyed by fire in 1696.

Framlingham has a link with the United States, for the town of Framingham (which was originally called Framlingham), in Massachusetts, was named after the Suffolk town. Thomas Danforth, who left the Suffolk Framlingham when he was a boy of twelve, was later given a grant of land in Massachusetts which was incorporated as Framlingham

¹ See Chapter VII, under Gresford.

in 1700. Danforth was Deputy-Governor of Massachusetts from 1679 till 1686, and a benefactor of Harvard College.

BRADGATE HOUSE* became a ruin about 1740, when demolition and storms combined to reduce it to its present dilapidation. But even now there are enough of the ruins still standing to give some idea of the charm and magnificence of the house as Lady Jane Grey knew it. Legend says that the top branches of the Pollard Oaks along the carriage-way were lopped off when the woodsmen heard of her execution. Some of them are still growing, a living memorial to the unhappy young mistress of the house. There is also a Wishing Stone, standing in a bed of bracken overlooking a trout stream, and, besides beautiful woods, an ancient mulberry-tree hanging over the wall of the old kitchen garden. It is believed to be one of the seven trees brought to England by Sir Walter Raleigh¹ in the early seventeenth century.

Among the ruins is a chapel, which may be inspected certain days a week if permission is sought. In 1928 Bradgate Park was presented "in trust for the City and County of Leicester that for all time it might be preserved in its natural state for the quiet enjoyment of the people of Leicester."

The high stone wall enclosing the Park possesses a step-ladder as well as gates, and visitors may use the old steps, probably the only ones of their kind in the country, to enter the Park. The top of the wall gives a wonderful view across the wooded streams, the big cedars of Lebanon, the old oaks, and the rich carpet of bracken, so enjoyed by a herd of deer.

The russet-brown brick manor of CHEQUERS, which stands in a gap in the Chilterns, was, in 1917, given by Lord Lee of Fareham to the nation as a country home for the Prime Minister or other leading Parliamentarians. The house lies in a hollow, surrounded by a yew and holly-trees and a fine park of some 560 acres. Near the manor is the famous Cymbeline's Mount, an earthwork of great antiquity, the name Cymbeline being Shakespeare's version of the name of the ancient British King Cunobelinus.

At one time Chequers was owned by a grandson of Oliver Cromwell, and the house contains many Cromwellian relics, including portraits of his sons and daughters, a pair of his jackboots, and the sword he is said to have used at the Battle of Marston Moor.

¹ See Chapter VII, under Sherborne.

NEIGHBOURING PLEASURES

There is a very lively and active 'neighbouring pleasure' near St Michael's Mount—the annual Floral Dance held at HELSTON on May 8 every year, when thousands of people throng the steep streets of the little town to watch or join in the famous dance, which goes on, with different dancers, all day long.

The name 'Floral' Dance has now been contracted to 'Furry' Dance, and the celebration is thought to be a survival of the Roman Floria.

The first Furry Dance of the day is held early in the morning. Later comes one for children, but the principal dance is held at midday, when only Helston-born people may join in. For the midday dance the men wear top-hats and morning suits, and their partners wear garden-party frocks and picture hats, and they dance right down the long main street, in and out of the crowd, and in and out of the cottages. All day long the Helston Band plays the well-known "Floral Dance" music. It's a wonderfully gay occasion.

BERRY POMEROY, the home of the Henry de Pomeroy who had himself bled to death on St Michael's Mount, belonged to the Pomeroy family from the time of William the Conqueror till the seventeenth century, when one of the family sold it to the Lord Protector Somerset. The castle was considerably damaged during the Civil War, and is now probably the most ivy-covered ruin in England. It was still inhabitable in the eighteenth century, however, and there is a story of a beautiful and wicked ghost who was seen by a physician called to attend to the steward's wife. The doctor was asked to wait a few minutes in a room from a corner of which led a flight of stairs. As he waited a beautifully dressed woman appeared, wringing her hands and showing other signs of great distress. She glided across the floor and mounted the stairs, but as she neared the top she turned back and gazed intently at the watching doctor. She was young and very beautiful, but she paused only for a moment before hurrying on.

The doctor found his patient very ill, so ill, in fact, that he made a return visit a few hours later, when he was relieved to find her condition much improved. As he was leaving the castle he asked the woman's husband about the beautiful young woman he had seen previously. The steward was most upset, and exclaimed that the doctor had seen a phantom which was always associated with death in the castle. He himself had seen it when his son was drowned, and now he feared it meant the death of his wife. "Don't worry," said the doctor. "Your wife is very much better, and I expect to find her well on the way to

recovery when I call again in the morning." But when the doctor did call again the steward's wife was dead.

The phantom was supposed to be the daughter of a former owner of the castle, with a heart as hard and cruel as her face was lovely.

Like Jack the Giant-killer, King Arthur was a Cornishman, born of a royal father at TINTAGEL CASTLE on the bare and rock-girt coast. And, like Jack, King Arthur, besides leading the British forces to victory in twelve great battles, fought and killed two giants, including a particularly ferocious one who wore a remarkable cloak woven from the beards of fallen kings.

Tintagel Castle itself, more famous in fable than in fact, was built on a bleak peninsula, joined to the mainland by only a narrow spine of rock. On either side is a chasm 300 feet deep. For hundreds of years Tintagel Castle has been little more than a scattered mass of ruins, with the ancient walls pierced with arrow-slits, but right up to the reign of Elizabeth the castle still had a governor, and it was used as a prison by the Duchy of Cornwall.

Tintagel Castle, a romantic enough setting for any tale of love or adventure, was the scene of the tragedy of Tristram and Queen Iseult—the Paolo and Francesca of Celtic legend. Tristram was the grandson of the venomous King Mark of Cornwall, a spiteful and cruel kinsman of King Arthur. He had been called Tristram ("sorrowful") because his mother, King Mark's daughter, had died in giving him birth. When he grew up Tristram was married to Iseult of the White Hands, the daughter of the King of Brittany, but unwittingly he had drunk a love-potion with Mark's beautiful young wife, Queen Iseult, and thereafter they had no love but for each other. King Mark, mad with jealousy, hid behind the lovers. He saw Tristram hang a jewel round the fair Queen's neck, and heard him playing to her on his harp, and, stepping out of the shadows, he slew Tristram "with a sharp-ground glaive."

The valiant King Arthur was slain at the Battle of Camlann. At the end of the twelfth century monks of Glastonbury claimed to have found his bones in a hollowed oak some sixteen feet below the ground, the great King's skull bearing the signs of ten wounds, all of them healed but the last. When the grave was opened Queen Guinever's golden hair crumbled to dust. The bones were carried into the church, and placed in a shrine.

Though Tintagel Castle is only a scattered ruin, TINTAGEL OLD POST OFFICE, at Trevena, is worth inspecting. It is a fourteenth-century stone manor house owned by the National Trust, and open to the

public. In 1954 a wild Cornish headland, **PENHALLICK POINT**, near Tintagel Castle, was given to the Trust in memory of George VI, and to mark the accession of Queen Elizabeth II.

Many kings and nobles lie buried beneath the ruins of **GLASTONBURY ABBEY**, where the first Christian church in England once stood. Not far away from the ruins is **Weary-All-Hill**, so called because it was there that Joseph of Arimathea and his band of missionaries rested in utter fatigue. While they were resting St Joseph took his thorn staff and planted it in the earth, and it took root and flourished. And ever afterwards it put forth blossoms on Christmas Day.

The Glastonbury thorn (which was very likely a hawthorn brought from Palestine by Crusaders) soon became famous, and countless thousands of people visited it, and paid good money for sprigs, including kings, and sailors, who liked to carry a sprig, and dying men, who asked to have the sprig buried with them. One of the trunks of the old tree planted by St Joseph was cut down in Elizabeth's reign. The other trunk would have suffered the same fate had not a chip flown up and blinded the zealous woodman! However, the Puritans finished the job, but by then many new plants were growing from cuttings of the original miraculous staff.

One veritable descendant was said to be growing in the rector's garden at **QUANTON**, in Buckinghamshire. In 1753, on Christmas Eve, a great crowd gathered with torches and lanterns to watch the miracle of the blossoms. But no blossoms appeared. The villagers, not to be shaken in their belief, declared that the new day could not be Christmas Day, went home, and held no celebrations.

On **Cundick Hill**, near Quainton, a headless host of riders gallops past at midnight—but whether they are seeking the missing hawthorn-blossom, who can say?

Legend, and perhaps legend founded on fact, certainly says that the bones in the hollowed oak coffin were those of King Arthur, but other legends give the King "a last resting-place" in many different parts of the country. In Cornwall there is a legend that the King did not die at all, but turned into a raven, and a raven he will stay till at the right time he "shall reign again, and recover his kingdom and sceptre." It is on King Arthur's account that no one will kill a raven in Cornwall, for no one wants the blood of the great King on his hands.

King Arthur figures in some of the many legends of the Wild Hunt which are found all over Europe. To see it as it rode through the sky meant certain death. In Northern England the Huntsman leading the

Wild Hunt is usually Woden, who haunts the same track season after season, with a pack of hounds who are demon dogs or the souls of unbaptized children. But in other parts of the country the Huntsman leading the strange Wild Hunt is often said to be King Arthur.

On full-moon nights King Arthur and his men with their spectral hounds have a quiet haunt, riding round the hill of CADBURY FORT, in Somerset, their horses shod with silver. A silver horse-shoe was found there once, in the reign of Richard III or Henry VII, which, as history goes, is not so very long ago. The hill, which is probably the Camelot of the Arthurian legends, has long been associated with fairies, and old people with long memories still talk about the fairy gold hidden in the hill—gold which the fairies had to leave behind "when the bells were put into the church."

SEWINGSHIELDS CASTLE, in Northumberland, a ruin as full of mystery as Cadbury Fort, is another of King Arthur's "last resting-places." One day a shepherd seeking some of his flock among the ruins, came across a subterranean passage. Fearfully he entered it, and, with hands outstretched, feeling the cold earth walls before him, he made his way little by little into the bowels of the earth. Presently he came to a great hall, a tremendous cavern where King Arthur and his followers lay asleep. On a table near the King lay a sword, a garter, and a bugle. The shepherd, fearful still, drew the sword and cut the garter, and the sleepers began to stir into wakefulness. Too terrified to blow the trumpet, the shepherd fled back along the cold earth passages, and as he fled a sad voice behind him cried:

"O woe betide that evil day
On which this witless wight was born
Who drew the sword, the garter cut,
But never blew the bugle horn."

Evidently King Arthur's time is not yet.

The Scots say that King Arthur is sleeping under ARTHUR'S SEAT, in Edinburgh, attended by a bodyguard of pechs—"short, wee men wi' red hair and long arms, and feet sae braid that when it rains they could turn them owre their heads, and then they served for umbrellas"—a useful bodyguard indeed. They will return to earth with the King when he awakes.

Much of King Arthur's uncommon skill and knowledge had been taught him by his remarkable tutor, Merlin, the prince of wizards. Merlin was a Welshman, having been born in CARMARTHEN. His parentage

was strange, to say the least, his mother being Matilda, a nun who was seduced by a "guildful sprite dwelling in mid-air betwixt the earth and moon." He lived in a cave near Carmarthen, known as Merlin's Cave, notorious for the wild noises that issued forth of ringing anvils, hammer-blows, and rattling chains. Merlin had set his spirits to make a brazen wall to surround Carmarthen, and as he left one day to call on the Lady of the Lake he told the spirits to carry on till he returned. But he never did return, for he himself fell under a spell. Some say that the Lady of the Lake, tired of his unwelcome attentions, and afraid of the man she called a "divell's son," enticed the wizard under a stone in the lake "to let him wit of the Mervailles there." But once he was under the stone the Lady refused to move it—and there Merlin stays to this day. It was Merlin who made the famous Round Table used by King Arthur and his Knights—said to be the one now at Winchester. It was divided into twenty-four radiating sections, with the name of each knight inscribed on the border. In the centre was a double red rose with a white centre. The table was redecorated in honour of a visit to Winchester by Henry VIII and the Emperor Charles V. Since then it has been damaged by bullet-marks—probably at the hands of Cromwell's men (who at any rate were convenient scapegoats for much wilful damage done to lovely things).

The Lady of the Lake, who finally vanquished Merlin, was a mischievous person altogether. She had stolen the famous Sir Lancelot,¹ son of the King of Brittany, when he was a baby, and brought him up till he was old enough to be presented at King Arthur's Court. He was another of the giant-killers, having vanquished Tarquin, the giant of Knot Hill, near Manchester, in a battle that was both fierce and gory. Lancelot was sent to conduct King Arthur's bride, Queen Guinever, to the Court, and it was during that long journey from her father's Court at Camelyard that she and Sir Lancelot began the guilty attachment that led in the end to the death of King Arthur and most of his knights. When the King learned the truth about Lancelot and Guinever he pursued Lancelot into Brittany, leaving the kingdom in the charge of his nephew Mordred. But Mordred declared King Arthur dead and usurped the crown, whereupon the King returned to England, and in a great battle slew Mordred—and was himself slain.

Guinever retired to a nunnery at Almesbury, "and wore white cloaths and black," and Sir Lancelot retired to a monastery.

Not far from Quainton stands CLAYDON HOUSE, long associated with Florence Nightingale and her sister Parthenope, who married Sir

¹ See Chapter II, under Bamburgh Castle.

Harry Verney, ancestor of the present owner. Claydon House is also famous for the Verney Papers, discovered after they had lain forgotten and ignored for generations in boxes stored in a long gallery at the top of the house. The Papers consisted of letters, poems, shopping-lists—everything connected with the intimate, personal life of the Verneys, who had lived at an earlier Claydon. Principally they concerned Ralph Verney, who saved everything—silk patterns for his baby's coat, embroidery silks for his sister, and letters and poems written with great affection to his wife, Mary, whom he called "Mischief," and her wholly delightful letters to him.

Sir Ralph's father, Sir Edmund Verney, had long been connected with the royal family, for he had been attached to the household of James I's elder son, Prince Henry, and later to Prince Charles's household, accompanying him and the Duke of Buckingham when Charles went to Spain to woo the Spanish Infanta. In spite of his affection for the dead Prince Henry, and for the tragic King Charles, Edmund Verney was convinced of the justice of the Parliamentary cause. Nevertheless he fought for Charles, for, he said, "I have eaten his bread, served him near thirty years, and I will not do so base a thing as to forsake him, but would rather lose my life (which I am sure I shall do) to preserve and defend those things which are against my conscience to preserve and defend."

His premonition was correct. He was killed "at the memorable batayle of Edgehill, father of six sonns and six daughters." After the battle Sir Edmund's severed hand, still grasping the Royal Standard, and still wearing a ring that Charles I had given him, was found on the battlefield. His body was never found, but now his ghost is said to haunt a passage at Claydon House, for ever seeking his severed hand.

Sir Edmund Verney's half-brother, Sir Francis, had to sell his property at Quainton and elsewhere to pay his debts, and for the more picturesque reason of wanting to equip a fleet of five ships to go privateering off the Barbary Coast. He sailed as a pirate against both Spanish and English ships, but his enterprise ended in disaster. He was captured, and after serving two years as a Sicilian galley-slave he died in Messina.

Sir Edmund Verney, a Parliamentarian at heart and so staunch a Royalist in battle, was succeeded by his son Sir Ralph—the same Sir Ralph who wrote and received so many of the Verney Papers. Sir Ralph remained a Parliamentarian, but he too faced a personal conflict, and, rather than sign the Solemn League and Covenant, he withdrew to France. Claydon was sequestered, but his valiant "Mischief" worked for its restoration to the family. Her letters to her absent husband give

a vivid picture of country life in Buckinghamshire, recording in delightful detail every facet of her daily life, from the food she ate to the state of the roads she used.

In the nineteenth century Claydon belonged to Sir Harry Verney, a soldier who had turned to agriculture to improve his land and the conditions of farm-workers. In 1857, when he was a widower with a grown-up family, he had proposed to Florence Nightingale. She refused him, as she had refused countless other proposals, and a few months later he married her elder sister, Parthenope, whom he described as "in her fortieth year, with the appearance of a lady but without the beauty of her sister."

Parthenope had been born in Naples, and was called by the Greek name for the city. When their second daughter was born her parents again chose to call their child after the city of her birth. So she was christened Florence. The girls' mother, Fanny, was a beautiful, generous woman of great vitality and ambition, and she saw their country home of LEA HURST, in Derbyshire, as a centre of cultured society. But Lea Hurst was never a success from a social point of view. It was too isolated, too cold, too small (even Florence admitted it "had only fifteen bedrooms"), and the shooting was poor, and the Nightingale family spent only a few months there every year.

As a young girl Florence had "heard voices," just as Joan of Arc had done, but it was many years before she realized what her vocation was, and many more years still before she was able to break away from her family circle and restrictions. She was a graceful girl, tall and willowy, with grey eyes and delicate colouring, and her wit and gift for mimicry made her a great success in Society both on the Continent and in England. Her mother was delighted with the blossoming of this strange, difficult daughter, but both she and Parthe (as she was usually called) swooned, stormed, and had hysterics whenever Florence mentioned nursing. For a time they defeated her. Hospitals generally were enough to fill any mother with misgivings. Most of the nurses alternated nursing with prostitution, and patients and nurses alike smuggled brandy and gin into the wards with noisy and often disastrous results.

After nursing her grandmother and old family nurse through their last illnesses Florence realized that nursing was a profession that demanded training, and she set out, again in the face of fierce family disapproval, to seek training in both nursing and administration. Parthe had hysterics, her mother declared she must be in love with some "low vulgar surgeon," and her father went off to London, disappointed at such a waste of a talented and beautiful daughter.

Florence heard her "voices" in 1837, but it was not until 1853 that

the way was clear for her to go ahead. The following year the British Army was sent to the Crimea. Cholera was raging, and cholera patients and wounded from battlefields lay in the Barrack Hospital at Scutari, jammed together on the floor, lying in dirty straw, wrapped in blood-stained blankets, without bandages, splints, chloroform, lamps, beds, or even water. Dispatches to *The Times*, written by the first war correspondent, William Howard Russell, roused England's fury and horror, and there was a public demand for nurses to be sent out.

Florence Nightingale's letter offering to go out crossed a letter from her old friend Sidney Herbert, Secretary of State for War, asking if she would go. So Florence sailed for the Crimea with thirty-eight nurses, arriving in time to help nurse the casualties from Balaklava and Inkerman. But even when she was out there Florence Nightingale still had a hard battle ahead, for her every suggestion was held up by red tape, but with the loyal backing of Sidney Herbert she managed to break through even that. Within five months of her arrival the death-rate in the Crimean hospitals had fallen from 42 per cent. to 2 per cent.—and she had already become a legend.

A letter to *The Times* in February 1855 gives this picture of how she appeared to her contemporaries:

She is a 'ministering angel' without any exaggeration in these hospitals, and, as her slender form glides quietly along each corridor, every poor fellow's face softens with gratitude at the sight of her. When all the medical officers have retired for the night, and silence and darkness have settled down upon those miles of prostrate sick, she may be observed alone, with a little lamp in her hand, making her solitary rounds. . . . No one who has observed her fragile figure and delicate health can avoid misgivings lest these should fail. . . .

But Florence was tougher than she appeared. She lived to be ninety, and her equally "delicate" mother and sister lived to be ninety-two and seventy-five. Parthenope, for all her hysterics and selfish demands, during her younger days, for Florence's constant attention and companionship, was a cultured and talented writer, and it was due to her research and that of her daughter-in-law, Margaret Verney, that the Verney Papers were so wittily edited.

Towards the end of her life Parthe became crippled with arthritis. Her husband, then eighty-two, was distracted, and Florence moved into Claydon House to help with the nursing. After her sister's death Florence stayed on at Claydon to look after Sir Harry. She was then a woman of sixty, he nearing ninety, and still a remarkably handsome man.

The suite of rooms which Florence Nightingale occupied during her

many years at Claydon is on the upper floor of Claydon House, a house remarkable for the beauty of its interior. The magnificent staircase, which passes twice round the hall in its gentle ascent to the upper landing, has been described as one of the "major wonders" of Claydon. Each step is inlaid with holly, ebony, and ivory in a geometrical design of infinite delicacy, but the greatest delight of all is the charming and beautiful wrought-iron balustrade, so delicately made that the garlands rustle with every passing step.

Lea Hurst, near Cromford, in Derbyshire, which proved so unsuccessful a home for the ambitious Fanny Nightingale, was occupied by various members of the family from the eighteenth century till 1946, when it was sold, and many of Florence's possessions with it. It is now a memorial home for nurses.

The ramifications of the Howard family (to which both Anne Boleyn and Katherine Howard belonged) are as complicated as the intersecting maze of lines at a railway-junction. The family branched out all over England, many of them marrying into the nobility, poking their fingers into politics and plots, and earning fame or disgrace according to their period or their deserts. Nowadays the Howard family is always connected with ARUNDEL CASTLE,* which they have possessed since the sixteenth century. Before the Conquest the castle belonged to the Kings of England, the first mention of it being in the will of Alfred the Great. After the Conquest the castle belonged to various families. Henry I gave it to his second wife, Adeliza (to whom he also gave PETWORTH¹), and on his death she gave it to William d'Albini, one of the most accomplished—and remarkable—men of his day. He so distinguished himself at a tournament in Paris that the Dowager Queen of France fell in love with him. William, however, was already in love with Adeliza, and would have none of the Dowager Queen of France. She was so furious at his rejection of her overtures that she shut him up in her garden and turned a lion loose on him. But d'Albini, already renowned as a man of action, attacked the lion, and, thrusting his arm down its throat, tore out its tongue. After that feat he was known as d'Albini of the Strong Arm. He won his other fight too, and married the queen of his choice, Adeliza.

Long after the last of the d'Albinis, Edward II's half-brother was granted the earldom of Norfolk. From him were descended the Mowbrays. One of them, little Anne Mowbray, was married to the ten-year-old Prince Richard of York, the younger of the two princes murdered in the Tower. Eventually one of the Mowbrays married a

¹ See Chapter II.

Howard. The Howards became the Dukes of Norfolk, and the title has remained in the family ever since. There have, however, been several close shaves, for the title has been attained at various times.

The first Howard, Duke of Norfolk (his mother was a Mowbray), was John, created Duke of Norfolk and Earl Marshal of England by Richard III in 1483. He raised an army of 4000 men to fight for Richard when Henry Tudor (later Henry VII) landed at Milford Haven and set up his standard amid an army of French, Welsh, and English soldiers. Norfolk had been warned that there was defection in Richard's camp, and a friend had hung this warning on his gate:

Jack of Norffolke be not to bolde,
For Dykon thy maister is bought and solde.

But both Norfolk and his "maister" Richard fought valiantly, Richard wearing his armour of polished steel and riding his great horse White Surrey. Richard fought as though possessed, wielding his long battle-axe where the fight was thickest. Henry Tudor stayed within the safety of his bodyguard: Richard was killed. Norfolk too was killed, and his son Thomas severely wounded and taken prisoner.

Thomas Howard, second Duke of Norfolk, had been knighted in 1478 at the marriage of his little kinswoman Anne Mowbray to the young Duke of York, but his father's title suffered attainder on the accession of Henry VII. Thomas was left in the Tower for three and a half years. After that the scheming King decided that he could make good use of a noble so determined to be on the right side of whoever wore the crown, and he released him. Norfolk, who possessed considerable military skill, became the chief general in the English Army. After he defeated the Scots at Flodden Field, when he was an old man of seventy, the King restored his titles, and he became the Duke of Norfolk in time to act as guardian of the realm while Henry was in France attending the Field of the Cloth of Gold. On Henry's return the old man retired to his castle of FRAMLINGHAM, where he died shortly afterwards.

But Thomas Howard, second Duke of Norfolk, is chiefly remembered for the fact that he was the grandfather of two Queens of England—Anne Boleyn and Katherine Howard.

His daughter Elizabeth married Sir Thomas Boleyn, of BLICKLING HALL,¹* and became the mother of Mary, Anne, and George.

His son Edmund married Jocosa Culpepper, and became the father of ten children, including the boisterous, affectionate young Katherine Howard. For his part in the Battle of Flodden Field Henry VIII

¹ See this chapter, p. 66.

rewarded Lord Edmund with a grant of 3*s.* 4*d.* a day for three years—but this was scarcely more than a token contribution towards the upkeep of his large family, and he must have been glad to arrange that Katherine should be brought up by his widowed mother, old Agnes, the Dowager Duchess of Norfolk.

Thomas Howard, third Duke of Norfolk, was the elder brother of Elizabeth and Edmund. He had two tricky periods to negotiate, when his two nieces, first Anne and then Katherine, fell from grace and were executed. As Anne Boleyn's father offered to sit in judgment on her, it is hardly surprising that her uncle Norfolk acted as Lord High Steward at both her trial and execution. He was in greater danger when Katherine was beheaded, and both he and his son Henry were arrested for reasonably concealing Katherine's offences. Henry was executed, Norfolk was saved by the death of Henry VIII, and after remaining in the Tower throughout Edward VI's reign, he was released by Mary in time to act as Lord High Steward at the trial of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland.

Norfolk's brother Lord William was arrested at the same time as Norfolk and Henry. Lord William was pardoned, and as a reward for his defence of London during the Wyatt Rebellion he was created Lord Howard of Effingham.

His daughter Douglass was the Douglass,¹ widow of Baron Sheffield, who claimed to have married Elizabeth's favourite the Earl of Leicester.

His son Charles,² the handsome and courtly Lord High Admiral of England, commanded the fleet which routed the Spanish Armada. Charles, who was created Earl of Nottingham, married Catherine Carey, daughter of Queen Elizabeth's half-brother or cousin, Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon. And it was this Countess of Nottingham³ who is supposed to have intercepted the ring Elizabeth had given Essex, and which he sent her when he was lying in the Tower under sentence of death.

Thomas Howard, fourth Duke of Norfolk, was the son of Henry Howard, executed for not telling tales about Queen Katherine. He was brought up by his aunt, Mary Howard, who had married Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond, Henry VIII's illegitimate son, who died when he was seventeen.

Thomas was married three times, and attempted a fourth. But this last attempt cost him his life.

His first wife was Lady Mary, daughter and heiress of Henry Fitzalan, twelfth Earl of Arundel. She died in childbirth, at the age of sixteen. His second wife was Margaret Audley, of AUDLEY END.^{4*} She died, and

¹ See Chapter V.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ See Chapter VI.

after marrying again and being a widower again Norfolk plotted to marry Mary Queen of Scots. He was by then one of the richest men in England. He was far from being the wisest, and, like his father, he ended his life on the scaffold.

All the Howards claim descent from a Howard or Hereward of the tenth century—the father of Lady Godiva,¹ and grandfather of the great outlaw Hereward the Wake.

The present Duke of Norfolk is Bernard Marmaduke FitzAlan-Howard, sixteenth Duke and Premier Duke and Earl. As Earl Marshal and Hereditary Marshal of England, the Duke was responsible for the entire organization of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Besides being responsible for the Coronation as a whole, the Duke of Norfolk attended every rehearsal and checked every item of procedure—a stupendous achievement.

The office of Earl Marshal dates back at least to the fourteenth century, and it has been hereditary in the Dukes of Norfolk since the seventeenth century.

The Heralds of England are responsible to the Earl Marshal. They originated in the twelfth century, when their job was to proclaim and conduct tournaments. This led to their taking over the marshalling of State ceremonies and the publishing of royal proclamations. In the thirteenth century, when closed helmets were introduced, and some form of recognition was necessary, the knights wore a surcoat painted with their arms—therefore a ‘coat of arms’—over their armour, and had their arms painted also on their shield. So it followed that the Heralds had to be experts in armorial devices, and it followed also that they began to devise and grant heraldic arms.

The illegal assumption of arms began very early, and Elizabeth sent her Kings of Arms (to whom the Crown delegates its powers) to make “Visitations” throughout the country, to pull down or deface improper arms, and to record those properly borne.

In former times the Earl Marshal had to conscript or call up men for the Army, and marshal them under the various banners and crests of their separate leaders. Eventually his knowledge had to be so wide that all the badges, crests, and other devices had to be written down and tabulated. This work was carried out by the Heralds, and the knowledge they gained in doing this turned them into semi-diplomats. They carried declarations of war, arranged challenges between one king and another, and, of course, helped in the organization of all Coronations, royal weddings, and funerals, as well as organizing jousts and tourneys.

¹ See Chapter V, under Coventry.

The Earl Marshal is now the head of the College of Arms, and the principal Officers of Arms all assisted with the organization behind the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. These principal Officers consist of three Kings—Garter, Norroy, and Clarenceux; six heralds—Windsor, Chester, York, and Lancaster (all instituted by Edward III), Richmond (Edward IV), and Somerset (Henry VIII); and four Pursuivants—Rouge Croix, Bluemantle, Rouge Dragon, and Portcullis, their names being taken from the red cross of St George, the blue surcoat worn by Edward III, the dragon supporter of Henry VII's arms, and the badge used by Henry VII.

For the 1953 Coronation the Duke of Norfolk had a tree specially felled at Arundel to make the staffs of office carried by the 200 Gold Staff Officers on duty in Westminster Abbey. Each staff was tipped with gold, and the Gold Staff Officers had the task of ushering the 7000 guests in the Abbey to their seats.

In 1937 the Duke of Norfolk married the Hon. Lavinia Strutt, daughter of the third Baron Belper. They have four daughters—Anne, Mary, Sarah, and Theresa.

There is a legend that says that the name Arundel is a corruption of the French word *hirondelle*, a swallow, the name of the horse owned by the giant Bevis of Southampton. Bevis, who was tall enough to wade across to the Isle of Wight, was once a warder at Arundel, and Bevis Tower was named after him.

There has been a castle on the present site since Saxon days. The original medieval castle was begun about 1090, much altered and enlarged in later years, and battered almost out of existence by the Roundheads during the Civil War. The only portions of the old castle which survived their treatment are parts of the barbican and the circular keep. The new castle was almost entirely rebuilt in 1890. It is still, like Windsor, the very essence of all that a castle should be. It is open several days a week between May and mid-September.

Arundel Castle has a link with Ringmer—and with the founding of Pennsylvania.

Sir William Springett, "a collonell at ye taking of Arundel Castle" in 1643, was the father of Gulielma Springett, born after he had died of wounds received in this battle. Lady Springett was in London when she heard that her husband was dying. In vain she pleaded with coachmen to take her south to Arundel. They refused to venture so far on the terrible roads, but, though she was pregnant, Lady Springett set out, undaunted. She was thrown into a ditch, benighted, and racked by anxiety. But, in spite of this, she arrived at the castle in

time to comfort her young husband's last hours. He was only twenty-three.

After Sir William's death Lady Springett went to Ringmer, where Gulielma was born. She became the wife of William Penn,¹ son of Admiral Sir William Penn, and for the first few years of their married life they lived at BASING HOUSE, Rickmansworth, now the offices of the Urban District Council. Penn planned the settlement of Pennsylvania while living at Rickmansworth, and he sailed for America in 1682. He returned to England two years later, and when he died in 1718 he was buried in the old Quaker burial-ground at JORDANS,* Buckinghamshire. The Mayflower Barn at Jordans is believed to be built from timber from the old ship, which was brought back to England and broken up.

There is a charming annual custom still carried out in the States, at West Grove Point, New Jersey, when a Quaker firm of rose-growers presents a red rose as token rent to a descendent of William Penn, to whom their land once belonged. Recently cuttings of rose-bushes from the garden at Basing House were flown to the States, carefully packed in moss. They were a present from English Quakers to the Quakers of America.

The Blickling Hall that the Boleyns knew was replaced by the present rose-red Jacobean mansion built for Sir Henry Hobart in the early seventeenth century. His daughter Henrietta was married as a very young girl to Charles Howard, Earl of Suffolk, and close kinsman of the Duke of Norfolk. Towards the end of Queen Anne's reign the young couple crossed to Hanover to ingratiate themselves with the future rulers of England. They were desperately poor—so poor that on one occasion the Duchess had to sell her hair to pay for a dinner. But she was agreeable, reasonable, with a very fair complexion, and when George I succeeded to the throne she was appointed to the household of the Princess of Wales. On the accession of George II the Duchess was installed at St James's Palace as the King's favourite, but in spite of the fact that she was agreeable and reasonable (or perhaps because of it) she received little from George except insults and snubs. Her husband really came off better, for he was given an annuity.

A dozen miles or so up the Tamar river from Plymouth stands CORREHELE HOUSE,* which belonged to the Edgcumbe family from 1353 to 1946. It now belongs to the National Trust, and is open to the public six days a week during the summer, and three days a week the rest of

¹ See Chapters III, under Arundel, and VI, under Knole.

the year. The main part of the house, including the magnificent Great Hall, was built at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, but an earlier fortified manor house was incorporated in this rebuilding.

Like many another manor house, Cotehele has known plenty of adventure. At a time when neighbour fought neighbour, and a private war bothered no one but the participants (and it was often no *bother* to them, only a pleasure), one of the Edgcumbe family was literally hounded out of the manor by the local freebooter, Sir Henry Trenowth. Sir Henry chased Richard Edgcumbe (who had been outlawed by Richard III) out of the manor and down to the cliff's edge, when, hearing a resounding splash and seeing his rival's hat floating away, he returned home satisfied that Richard had been drowned. But Richard, who may have lost his home, had not by any means lost his wits, and he had tricked Sir Henry by trundling a boulder into the water and throwing his hat after it!

Richard Edgcumbe hid in the near-by woods, living on berries, till he managed to escape to Brittany. There he joined up with Henry Tudor (later Henry VII) and returned to England in his army. He fought so valiantly that he was knighted on Bosworth Field, where Henry himself was crowned and King Richard was killed. Sir Richard Edgcumbe was later appointed Comptroller of the Royal household.

Sir Richard was also granted his former enemy's estates, and legend says he had the great satisfaction of *really* chasing Sir Henry over the cliffs and into the sea! On a rock above the river stands a chapel which Sir Richard built as a thank-offering after his safe return from France.

Both the interior and exterior of Cotehele, which is one of the best-preserved medieval houses in the West Country, have remained almost unchanged for the past three hundred years.

Cotehele House was given to the nation in 1947 by the Treasury, which had accepted it—the first historic house to be so acquired—in lieu of death duties from the sixth Earl of Mount Edgcumbe. It was he who left on loan the fine collection of armour and weapons, tapestries, and late Stuart and early Georgian furniture that had always been in the house.

On the other side of the Cornish peninsula, not far from Land's End, lies the tiny hamlet of ZENNOR, tucked into a fold of the dour grey hills. Zennor Head, a rugged headland with granite and bluestone cliffs 350 feet high rising sheer out of the Atlantic, was given to the National Trust in 1953 by a Coventry industrialist. He bought the

property, about fifty acres, piece by piece over a period of ten years or more. Footpaths lead from the village to the headland, which glories in a wealth of cliff flowers—and in magnificent views of the coast. The coast itself is a favourite basking-place of seals.

The little settlement itself is dominated by the solid twelfth-century church, where, on an old pew-end, is carved a portrait of the famous Zennor mermaid.

Long ago Cornish churches were as famed for their choirs as Welsh churches are to this day, and the choir at Zennor church was famed throughout Cornwall. One day the vicar of the church was strolling along the beach when he saw the mermaid, and, being struck with her beauty and modesty of bearing, invited her to church to hear his choir. Gladly the little mermaid accepted the invitation. She was, she said, passionately fond of music. And the following Sunday there she was, sitting demurely at the back of the church, drinking in the music with evident delight. After that first day the little mermaid went regularly to church, always sitting at the back so that her dampness would not inconvenience others. But people began to talk, as people will, and to ask among themselves, was it the music that appealed to the lovely creature, or was it because of the squire's handsome young son, Mathey Trewella, that she went so unfailingly to church? It seems that the neighbours had guessed aright, for one Sunday when the mermaid made her way back to the beach the squire's son went with her, and he has never been seen again.

People thought that Mathey Trewella was lost for ever, but not so many years ago, when sailing-ships still plied up and down the Channel, a ship ran under the lea of the Cornish coast, seeking shelter, and dropped anchor. Soon a sweet, seductive voice was heard hailing the captain. He leant over the side, and, yes, there was the mermaid. She greeted him very civilly, and asked, in her lovely voice, would he mind raising the anchor and dropping it elsewhere? It was blocking the entrance to her cave, she explained, and, alas, till it was moved Mathey Trewella was a captive. The captain returned civility with civility, and, saluting the mermaid with his customary touch of the forelock, shifted his ship away from her little patch of seaweed.

There was another famous Cornish mermaid, an honest, flower-loving, child-loving creature who not only made a bargain and kept it—but paid a dividend as well.

It is a good many years ago now, but one day this pleasant mermaid was captured at low tide by an old fisherman in a cove near LIZARD POINT, near where she lived. She had been enticed ashore by some

flowers growing on the cliffs, and she had been so engrossed in collecting her nosegay that she had not noticed that the sea had slipped away behind her and was now well out of reach. As she sat and wrung her hands the old fisherman came upon her, and earnestly she begged him to carry her back to the water. She was afraid, she said, shuddering. She was afraid that her husband would grow hungry and eat the children, for he was an impatient creature who liked to have his meals on time. The old fisherman's heart was touched, and he picked her up tenderly in his old rough hands and carried her back to the water. The mermaid splashed about happily, and before she dived for home she asked the fisherman what he most desired. The old man scratched his head. There wasn't much time to think, but he thought it would be powerful handy to be able to break the spells of witchcraft, to identify thieves, and to restore stolen goods. The mermaid promised to teach him all these things, and she gave him a comb, telling him to comb the water when he wished to summon her. And summon her he did, and she taught him all he asked, and for good measure she taught him as well the art of curing shingles and the St Vitus Dance.

There was once a belief that all Cornishmen were born with tails as a vengeance for having been so rude to Thomas à Becket as to have cut off his horse's tail, but in spite of the sea-going tradition of Cornishmen, it was not fish-tails they grew, but just tails! Fortunately, the curse or vengeance was fairly short-lived, and this mark of infamy, "which was everywhere notorious," disappeared with the death of those whose fathers had been concerned in the incident.

By and large the mermaids of Britain are a rather charming lot. There have, of course, been a few wild and wilful ones, like the Sutherland mermaid who used to go about *without her tail on!* But the wild and wilful ones are rare, and a typical British mermaid is the modest little creature who once lived in ROSTHERNE, in Cheshire. She preferred the quieter inland waterways to the rough and tumble of sea life. She dwelt very peaceably in a lake, and made regular appearances on Easter Day, and, indeed, whenever the church-bells rang.

In King John's reign, or perhaps even earlier, in Henry II's, there was a merman who lived at ORFORD CASTLE, in Suffolk, for six months. He had been caught in a net by fishermen and presented to Bartholomew de Glandville, builder and owner of the castle. He was delighted with the long-haired creature, and kept him as half-prisoner, half-guest.

It is said that the merman ate well, but that "he spake not one word," even though he occasionally accompanied the local fishermen

on their expeditions. Sometimes, too, he attended church, though "he never showed any sign of adoration."

The river Ore runs between Orford Castle and the coast, but at last the merman "fledde secretelye to the sea and was never after seene nor heard of." Villagers and fisherfolk living near the Castle nodded their heads sympathetically when they heard the news of the merman's disappearance. It was spring-time, and they understood well enough. He had gone to seek a mermaid. In the thirteenth century (according to Gervase of Tilbury) mermen and mermaids abounded in the seas around Britain. Unfortunately no one has caught a glimpse of any at all since the civil sea-captain saw the Zennor mermaid in the days of the sailing-ships.

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IV

Gunpowder Plot

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

ROBERT CATESBY, of CHASTLETON,* Oxfordshire, the originator of the Gunpowder Plot. He was a man of considerable charm; the son of Anne Throckmorton, of Ashby St Legers, one of the same family as Sir Walter Raleigh's wife, Bessie Throckmorton.
Catesby's cousin

FRANCIS TRESHAM, who was the son of Muriel Throckmorton, of RUSHTON HALL, Northamptonshire. Tresham was a fickle, fearful man, and is generally believed to be the man who revealed the Plot.
Two other cousins of Catesby and Tresham were

ROBERT WINTER (or Wintour), of HUDDINGTON COURT, Worcestershire, "neere fortie yeares of age," who deserted his companions in their last desperate stand, and his brother

THOMAS WINTER, Catesby's inseparable companion, a good-looking and courageous man. Another of the Plotters was Thomas Winter's old companion from the wars,

GUY FAWKES, a Yorkshireman.

The Plotters were nearly all old friends or relatives of one another. The Winters' sister was married to one of them.

JOHN GRANT, of Norbrook, a fortified house in Warwickshire, where the Plotters stored arms and ammunition. Besides the Winters, there were two other brothers in the Plot,

CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT and

JOHN WRIGHT, reputed to be the best swordsman in England. Their sister married

THOMAS PERCY, who was an old friend of Catesby, and who, like him and Tresham, had taken part in Essex's rebellion against Elizabeth.
The other Plotters were

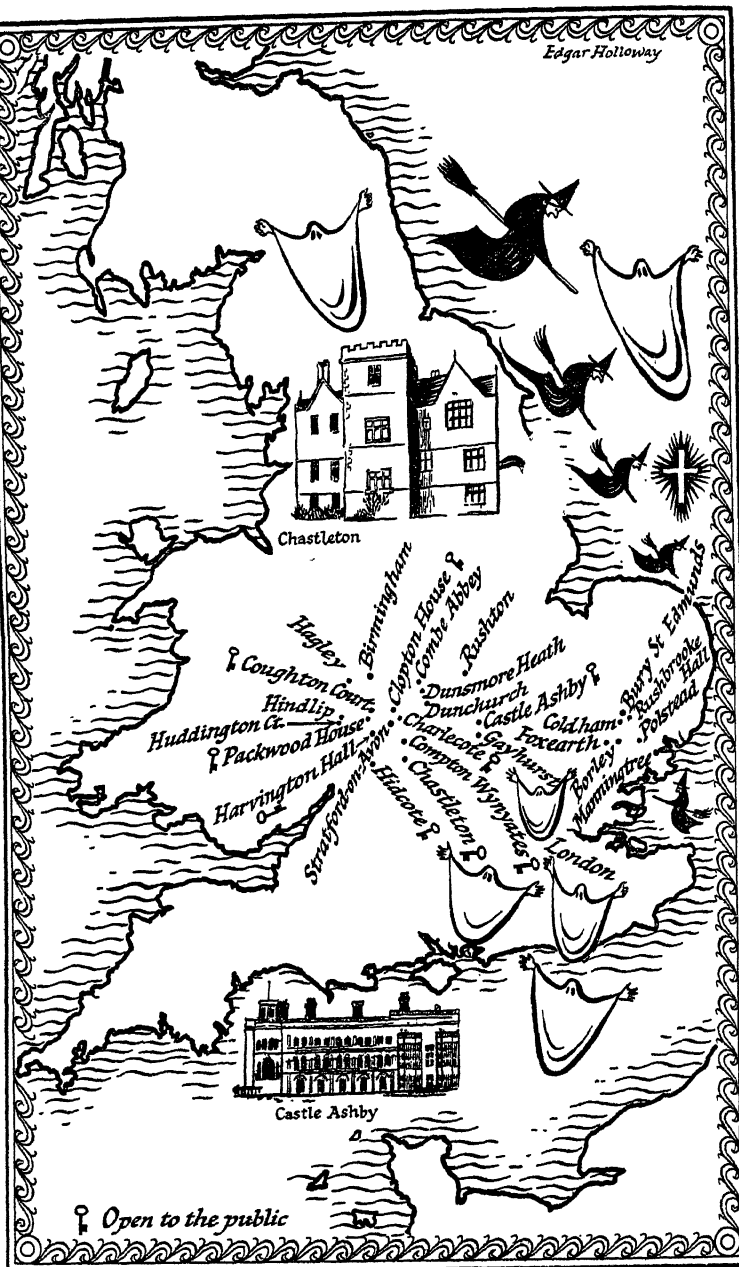
SIR EVERARD DIGBY, who was lent a Throckmorton house, COUGHTON COURT,* in Warwickshire, "for the duration";

AMBROSE ROOKWOOD, who owned a fine string of horses (which in the end saved neither him nor his companions);

ROBERT KEYES, who had suffered so harshly for his religion that he was ripe for any revenge; and

THOMAS BATES, Catesby's confidential servant.
Just thirteen.

Edgar Holloway



♀ Open to the public

IV

The Gunpowder Plotters were in essence Jacobean Commandos. Like modern Commandos, they were ready to echo Guy Fawkes's opinion that "dangerous diseases require desperate remedies." They were ready to plan carefully, work silently, strike swiftly—and to take the consequences. They showed tremendous patience, and resourcefulness; most of them showed great courage. They failed, but their failure was largely if not entirely due to unforeseen delays—and to very understandable human frailties.

The Plot was very largely a family affair. Many of the conspirators were related by blood or by marriage, and between most of them was a strong bond of affection and friendship.

The Gunpowder Plot was the most famous cloak-and-dagger plot in history, and the wild flight of the conspirators from London and across Worcestershire and Warwickshire ranks second only to Charles II's flight from Worcester for desperate horsemanship and desperate fortunes. But, unlike Charles, the Plotters achieved no measure of success.

With the devil at their heels, the fugitives galloped across half England, stopping only here and there for a hastily snatched meal or a quickly said Mass, for a last farewell to wife and children, defeated, dirty, haggard, and utterly exhausted. Death was only a few days away from most of them, and they rode desperately, always with one eye over their shoulder.

The Plot originated in the fertile mind of Robert Catesby, who had been born in Warwickshire, where, during Elizabeth's reign, he had seen many Roman Catholic families (among them the famous Throckmortons) hounded, imprisoned, and fined to the point of penury. The whole county needed only a spark to set it ablaze.

Catesby was a man of charm and persuasion about thirty years of age at this time. He owned the CHASTLETON* estate in Oxfordshire, which he sold in 1602 to provide funds for the Plot (which was to prove an expensive mistress indeed). As the Plot boiled round in his mind he looked for a confidant, and turned first to his cousin and inseparable companion, Thomas

Winter, of HUDDINGTON COURT, a moated, half-timbered manor house near Droitwich, Worcestershire.

Thomas Winter was about thirty-three, a small, strong, good-looking man, and an accomplished linguist. He was utterly dauntless. He was interested in any plot to secure tolerance for Roman Catholics, but he refused to countenance bloodshed until all other ways had been tried.

At this time the Spanish Ambassador in the Netherlands, Velasco, was negotiating a peace between Spain and England. At his own suggestion Thomas Winter visited Velasco to see if he could persuade him to insert a clause providing protection for Roman Catholics, but he soon realized that Velasco was unwilling to do more than give a verbal hint to James.

So much for that hope. Winter turned away, a bitterly disappointed man.

It was at Ostend, on his return journey, that he accidentally ran into an old comrade from the wars, Guy Fawkes, a Yorkshireman. The two joined forces for the return journey, and Winter told Fawkes something of Catesby's Plot.

Meanwhile Catesby, who was a prudent and capable organizer, had roped in more men, all of them hand-picked. Like one of his later recruits, Catesby had at one time been a Protestant, but he had reverted to his family's faith of many generations. In Elizabeth's reign he had joined Essex's¹ strange, unorganized rebellion, for which his reward was to have been religious freedom for himself and his family. As it turned out, his 'reward' was a fine of £3000—and official (if secret) recognition that he was a likely troublemaker.

Thomas Percy, Catesby's next confidant, had also taken part in Essex's abortive rebellion. He too was an ardent Roman Catholic, and, moreover, he promised £4000 from the rents of his kinsman the ninth Earl of Northumberland²—the same Earl of Northumberland, of Syon House, who spent sixteen years in the Tower because of his relationship to Thomas Percy, and because his old enemy Cecil thought (or pretended he thought) that had the Plot succeeded Catesby had intended offering Northumberland the Protectorship during the minority of the new sovereign.

While Elizabeth was still alive Thomas Percy had visited James at his Court in Scotland, and wrung from him the promise that should he ever attain the throne of England he would at least turn a blind eye to the celebration of Mass (which James afterwards

¹ See Chapter V.

² See Chapter III and Chapter IX.

denied). But no sooner had James succeeded to the throne of England than fresh hostilities broke out against Roman Catholics. Percy, always excitable, and now resentful as well, was excellent fuel for the Plotters' fire.

The next Plotters to join the group were Percy's two brothers-in-law, Christopher and John Wright, and Thomas Winter's brother, Robert, and their brother-in-law, John Grant, of Warwickshire. John Wright was reputed to be the best swordsman in England, but that did not save his life when peril closed in on all sides. John Grant possessed an even more valuable asset than a skilled sword—a strongly fortified house, NORBROOK, near Stratford-on-Avon. Catesby immediately sent off his confidential servant, Bates, to stock Grant's house with guns and ammunition in readiness for any eventuality.

Bates, the unfortunate man, was the only one of the Plotters not born a gentleman. He was admitted to the secret because Catesby believed that he had already guessed that some mischief was afoot. He must have wished afterwards that he had been more of a servant and less of a confidant.

Meanwhile the persecution of the Roman Catholics gained in strength. They had waited patiently to see if the improvement of conditions promised by James would be realized, but instead of an improvement fresh orders were issued to judges and magistrates to enforce the anti-Catholic laws with the utmost rigour.

To the Plotters the renewed persecution signalled (and justified) the death of James. In point of fact, the renewed persecution led instead to their own deaths, violently, unpleasantly, and, in some cases, disgracefully.

While the business of storing the gunpowder and wood at a house in Lambeth, and of preparing the vault under Parliament House, went on money was running out. Catesby realized that new blood—to provide fresh funds—was essential. But, though he needed money, his first new recruit was one of the new poor, Robert Keyes, an old friend so savagely fined that he was ready for any revenge—a man who would stick at nothing. For his next new recruit Catesby did indeed look for money, and he approached Sir Everard Digby, one of the few Roman Catholics who were still wealthy.

Sir Everard, who was then about twenty-five, had, as a boy, been left a ward of Queen Elizabeth's, and he had been brought up at Court as a Protestant. But just before the Queen died he had turned to Roman Catholicism, and, giving up the promise of a

brilliant career at Court, he had retired to his country property of GAYHURST, in Buckinghamshire, a lovely Elizabethan stone building, already possessing a romantic association. It had been given by the Queen to Sir Francis Drake¹ in honour of his sailing round the world. But Sir Francis, though no doubt appreciating the sentiments, did not apparently appreciate the house, for he sold it the very next day to Sir William Mulsho, whose daughter married Sir Everard.

As the Plot grew in scope and the Plotters in numbers Gayhurst became one of the main meeting places of the conspirators. Nicholas Owen, the remarkable Jesuit priest who specialized in designing secret hiding-places, devised a movable ceiling and a secret place behind a fireplace in the manor. The cellars hid a labyrinth of secret ways, and the whole house was honeycombed with escape routes. It was a house designed for intrigue and conspiracy, and the Gunpowder Plotters met there frequently. It is said that Sir Everard haunts the place to this day, pacing unhappily between the garden's hedges of cut yew.

Sir Everard had needed much persuasion to join the Plot. Like most of the rest, he was averse to bloodshed, and, unlike most of the rest, he was cool-headed enough to realize only too clearly the desperate risks and hazards they were up against. Besides, he had a young wife and two small sons. Eventually, however, he did allow himself to be persuaded into joining, and with his family he moved to COUGHTON COURT,* in Warwickshire, to be nearer the other conspirators. Coughton Court belonged to the Throckmortons, a family long renowned for its Roman Catholicism and its willingness to support desperate ventures. For once the Throckmortons had no direct personal part in the Roman Catholic plot of the moment, but they lent Coughton Court to Sir Everard, who was a connexion by marriage.

The mansion played a dramatic part in the last stages of the Plot.

Sir Everard, in joining, promised to give £1,500 to the general fund, and to organize, under the pretext of a big coursing match, a great gathering of Roman Catholics on the day Parliament was to be opened (and blown up). The match was to be held at Dunsmore Heath, in Warwickshire, and there he and his friends would await news from London of the success—or failure—of the Plot.

They must all have been haunted by the thought of failure, and of what it must mean in torture, disgrace, and death, but through one delay after another the Plot went forward. Delays frayed their

¹ See Chapters VI and VIII.

nerves, Catesby himself growing restless and excitable enough to attract unwelcome and unwise attention. The continual delays (while help was sought on the Continent; when the opening of Parliament was postponed) called for more money, and in the final reckoning brought about the discovery of the Plot. Had the Plot been executed on the original date the funds would not have needed replenishing, and Catesby would not have had to call on Tresham for support.

But Catesby was compelled to enlist more recruits. The first was Ambrose Rookwood, of COLDHAM HALL, near Stanningfield, Suffolk. Like Sir Everard Digby, Rookwood was a young man with a beautiful wife and two small sons. Of more interest to Catesby was his magnificent stud of horses, an invaluable asset to any string of conspirators who knew that the Devil might yet ride at their heels. After much persuasion he consented to join the Plot because of his great friendship for Catesby, whom he "loved and respected as his own life." Again like Digby, Rookwood moved from his home to be nearer the centre of operations, and rented CLOPTON HOUSE,* near Stratford-on-Avon. During the long months of plotting men came and went constantly to Clopton House on furtive errands, riding some of Rookwood's fine horses. He himself was a conspicuous figure in his "Hungarian riding-cloak, lined all in velvet exceedingly costly."

Clopton House contained several priests' holes, and a secret chapel in the roof where the conspirators are said to have held their meetings.

The cast for the Plot was now complete—except for one man, Francis Tresham, of RUSHTON HALL, Northamptonshire. His inclusion was Catesby's great mistake, and was probably the chief cause of the disaster that overwhelmed Plot and Plotters. Tresham was rich, but he was a fickle and fearful man, and the other Plotters were aghast when they learnt that he had been entrusted with their secret. Catesby, no doubt, had been blinded by his ability and willingness to contribute £2000, but the others never fully trusted him. There is little real doubt that it was he who revealed the Plot to Lord Mounteagle, who had married one of his sisters.

The Plotters had drawn up a list of Roman Catholic members of the House, and they were all to be summoned away by some urgent message on November 5. Tresham did not consider this plan sufficiently foolproof, and demanded to be allowed to warn Mounteagle and Lord Mordaunt, who was also a brother-in-law.

Catesby categorically refused. There were men he would like to warn personally, but he insisted that they must take their chance. But Mounteagle did receive an anonymous warning—"i would advyse yowe as yowe tender your lyfe to devyse some excscuse to shift of your attendance at this parlement."

The game was up!

Mounteagle's servant, hearing his master read the letter aloud as he sat at table, sped to Catesby to warn him that the Plot was discovered, but Catesby refused to be convinced. Fawkes visited the vaults of Parliament House and found that nothing had been disturbed, nothing was out of place, and Catesby persuaded himself that the warning had been a false alarm. They waited in an agony of anxiety to see if the authorities would take any action. But the authorities lay low, and Catesby, still unwilling to abandon the scheme, decided to go ahead.

He rehearsed the key rôle each man was to play. Digby, Tresham, and Grant were to ride to Coombe Abbey, in Warwickshire, and seize the nine-year-old Princess Elizabeth. Thomas Percy, who was a Gentleman Pensioner (an élite corps of fifty gentlemen established by Henry VIII),¹ was to enter Whitehall Palace and capture the five-year-old prince Charles, and take him to Dunchurch, near Rugby. Prince Henry, aged eleven, was expected to be blown up with the King and Parliament. If he escaped Catesby waiting at Charing Cross would declare him the new king. If he were killed Catesby would declare Charles or Elizabeth in his stead.

And Guy Fawkes was to fire the gunpowder train.

In spite of Catesby's optimism, disaster was awaiting them all. The Plotters were outwitted by Sir Robert Cecil, the Secretary of State. He knew of the Plot well enough—in fact, Catesby, Percy, and Tresham had all been marked men since their participation in Essex's rebellion. But Cecil bided his time. He wanted to catch them all red-handed.

Guy Fawkes was arrested, booted and spurred for immediate flight. Matches were in his pocket, a dark lantern by the door. His arms were pinioned, and he was taken straight before the King, though it was four o'clock in the morning, but, though admitting the Plot, he refused to divulge the names of his accomplices.

By this time Catesby and John Wright had already left London. Hearing rumours of Fawkes' arrest, they galloped north to put Digby on his guard. Thomas Percy and Christopher Wright

¹ See Chapter I, under Corfe Castle.

stayed till they heard of Guy Fawkes' arrest. Then they took horse and followed Catesby, riding desperately through the night. Robert Keyes and Rookwood stayed till the next morning, when London woke in a fever of terror. Keyes set out at once, Rookwood some hours later. But the dauntless Thomas Winter, when warned by one of the Wrights at five in the morning that all was lost, answered, "Go to Mr Percy, and bid him be gone; I will stay and see the uttermost."

With relays of fine horses ready for him (as there had been for the others), Rookwood galloped out of London in pursuit of his fellow-conspirators. He overtook Keyes on Finchley Common, and together they galloped on and on, linking up later with Percy and Christopher Wright, and still later with Catesby and John Wright. They rode together to Lady Catesby's home at Ashby St Legers, in Northamptonshire, where Robert Winter was awaiting them. They rode in, at six in the evening, mud-stained, desperate, and almost speechless with fatigue. Rookwood had ridden the eighty miles in just over six hours. But there was no time to lose. The fugitives stayed only to eat a hasty meal, and galloped on to join Digby on Dunsmore Heath.

By now the whole country was in arms behind them. Their friends evaporated like a mist. Fawkes was questioned, re-questioned, tortured, but, though he confessed his own part in the Plot, no word of the other conspirators would he divulge until their names and duties in the Plot were common knowledge. When told earlier that his associates had betrayed themselves he answered calmly, "Then it is superfluous to ask me."

Out in the country the others were in almost equally desperate plight. Most of the "coursing match" sportsmen slipped away on sight of the travel-stained riders. Those not in the Plot guessed that something was afoot, and that something had gone wrong. They wisely found urgent business to take them home. But the principal conspirators and some twenty-five sympathizers rode on to John Grant's home, Norbrook. Time was running against them, and, in urgent need for fresh horses, the men, strongly opposed by the cool-headed Robert Winter, broke into stables at Warwick and exchanged their tired horses for fresh ones. The clatter of the hooves and the general commotion aroused the sleeping town, and the fugitives rode on to Norbrook, followed by curses and threats of vengeance. It was a foolish action in a grim necessity. They had shouted their whereabouts from the housetops.

They rode into Norbrook at one in the morning, and, unsaddling their horses, stumbled into the house half dead with fatigue.

They could go no farther. But after a few hours' rest the whole house was ringing with activity again. Sir Everard gave Catesby's man, Bates, a letter to take to Coughton Court, about ten miles away, to tell Lady Digby of the failure of the Plot. He arrived at dead of night, to find Lady Digby and other ladies and prominent Jesuit priests waiting in the Gatehouse to hear the fateful news, Bates waited only to feed his horse, then remounted and rode off again to rejoin his master.

Meanwhile the rest of the Plotters had armed themselves from the store of weapons previously hidden in Grant's house, and had set out post-haste for Huddington Court, the home of the Winters. They clattered over the bridge and into the forecourt that same afternoon, haggard, wretched, unkempt, watched in aching anxiety by Robert Winter's wife, Gertrude. The window where she sat, and watched, and waited, is still called Lady Winter's window. They were joined later in the day by Thomas Winter, who had ridden alone from London, and by Bates, who had returned from delivering Digby's letter of farewell to his wife.

The fugitives appealed in vain to their Roman Catholic friends in the neighbourhood. Doors were slammed in their faces. They were turned away with anger and abuse. Every man was afraid.

Once more the fugitives had to be on the move, and after a few hours' sleep they rose again, to hear Mass said before dawn. Then came a hasty breakfast, and a last farewell for Robert Winter and his wife and children. The short night's rest had done little to refresh the weary men, but they gathered up the arms, ammunition, and armour that lay ready in the hall, and, in terrible fatigue, fled over the rough country roads, through Stourbridge, Clent, and Hagley, on and on to Holbeach House. Holbeach, on the borders of Staffordshire, was the home of a prominent sympathizer, Stephen Lyttelton.

Now disaster followed disaster.

When fording the Stour river, in flood after heavy rains, the fugitives' gunpowder had become wet. While they were drying it in the kitchen at Holbeach House an ember fell from the stove, igniting the powder, wrecking the kitchen, and seriously injuring both Catesby and Rookwood. One keg was blown right through the roof.

It was an omen of doom.

Stephen Lyttelton and Robert Winter slipped out of the house and hid in a near-by wood. Bates deserted too—and then Sir Everard, who said he was going to secure reinforcements. He was captured by Sir Richard Walshe, Sheriff of Worcestershire, and his men, sent to besiege Holbeach House. The tiny garrison fought with the utmost gallantry, but the fight was too unequal to last any length of time. John Wright, the best swordsman in England, was killed outright. He was the luckiest. His brother Christopher was mortally wounded. Rookwood, who was badly burnt, Grant, who was seriously wounded, and Thomas Winter, whose arm was broken by a pike, were badly mauled by the country people who rushed into the affray as soon as the shooting stopped to strip the helpless men of their valuables, and even of their clothes. Percy and Catesby had been shot—by the same bullet—by Trooper John Steele (who received a pension for life for his prowess). Catesby, nearly blinded by his wounds, crawled on hands and knees into the house, seized a crucifix, and died. Percy died three days later, and his head—and Catesby's—were cut off and sent to London, where they were exhibited with relish, “sett uppon the ends of Parliament House.”

The rest of them were bundled into the Tower, along with Bates, who had been recaptured in Staffordshire, and Tresham, arrested in London. For a time Robert Winter, “square made, somewhat stooping,” and Stephen Lyttelton, “a very tall man, swarthy of complexion, of about thirty yeeres of age,” managed to evade capture, hiding in the bitter cold in barns and farms all over Worcestershire and Staffordshire. The weather was appalling, and at last they were driven to seek shelter in Hagley Hall, owned by Stephen's cousin Humphrey Lyttelton. Here they enjoyed the luxury of a bed for the first time for weeks—but it was a luxury of short duration. They were betrayed by a cook or a gamekeeper, and taken to the Tower to join the others.

Bates was sent to the rack, and confessed everything.

Tresham was also racked, and confessed, implicating the Jesuit priests Garnet and Tesimond, who had been waiting at Coughton Court with Lady Digby, but a few nights later, when attacked by violent pains (probably caused by poison), he retracted his confession—and died.

By now there were eight prisoners left alive and waiting to be tried—Sir Everard Digby, Robert and Thomas Winter, Ambrose Rookwood, John Grant, Guy Fawkes, Robert Keyes, and Bates.

They were of course found guilty, and executed in batches of four.

On January 30, 1606, the first four were executed—Sir Everard Digby, once a ward of Elizabeth's Court and the father of two small boys; Robert Winter, Catesby's cousin; John Grant, of the fortified house; and Thomas Bates, the confidential servant.

The following day the other four were executed on the same scaffold outside St Paul's—Thomas Winter, Catesby's cousin, inseparable companion, and first confidant; Ambrose Rookwood, with the beautiful wife and the fine horses; Robert Keyes, the man with a chip on his shoulder; and the most famous conspirator of all time, the immortal Guy Fawkes.

SINCE THEN

CHASTLETON HOUSE* is open to the public most days of the week all the year round. It stands in the heart of the Cotswolds, near Moreton-in-Marsh, and was built on land sold by Robert Catesby to Walter Jones, M.P. for Worcestershire, and his wife, Elinor, at one time a maid-of-honour to Queen Elizabeth. The house was completed for them about 1614, and has remained practically unaltered ever since—and in the possession of the same family. It is one of the finest houses in Central England.

After the exposure of the Gunpowder Plot the prudent Walter Jones, knowing the uncertainty of kings' tempers and tolerance, wisely purchased a "pardon" from James I (who used the practice as a simple means of raising money from an uneasy populace). Unknown to Jones, the purchase-money he had paid Catesby had been used to buy gunpowder for the Plot, and, just in case James wished to implicate him some time or another, Jones got in first, and, with a "pardon" to display in the Hall, considered he had purchased a good insurance policy.

His grandson Captain Arthur Jones (whose portrait and sword are both in the house) was the hero of a wild adventure after the battle of Worcester. He escaped from the battle, hotly pursued by a posse of Cromwell's men, who vainly hoped that the fleeing figure might be King Charles himself. He galloped through the hilly country, across the border into Gloucestershire, and on to Chastleton, five miles from Moreton-in-Marsh. His wife had scarcely had time to hide him in a secret chamber—which led from what is now known as the Cavalier Room—when the Roundheads hammered on the door. They demanded the surrender of the Captain, but his wife declared that he was not there. When they remarked on the spent horse in the stables Mrs Jones

invited them to search the house. They did search the house, but, though they found no trace of the Captain, they were suspicious enough to declare their intention of camping for the night in the Cavalier Room. If Mrs Jones's heart turned over she gave no sign of it. Her husband was only a few feet away from his enemies, but she made no complaint whatever at the Roundheads' suggestion. In fact, she had her servants send up an ample meal for the soldiers from the big kitchen, and plenty of ale to refresh them after their long and disappointing ride. But she took the precaution, when no one was looking, of lacing the ale with laudanum, and the drugged men slept so soundly that they took no notice of the staunch Mrs Jones stepping over their corpse-like bodies. She released her husband from his hiding-place, and he sped away to freedom on a waiting horse. He was in hiding for two years, but spent the rest of his life peacefully at home at Chastleton. In 1660 he celebrated the reversal of his fortunes—and the return of King Charles—by planting a Restoration Oak outside the Great Chamber. It is still there.

There are many treasures in this fine and beautifully built old Jacobean mansion, with its magnificent ceilings and panelling. Among the treasures is the Bible which Charles I used on the scaffold, and handed to Bishop Juxon as a farewell gift. Later Bishop Juxon lived at Little Compton manor house, not far from Chastleton, and the last of the Juxons gave the Bible to the Jones family in 1790.

After the death of the last Lady Winter in 1697 HUDDINGTON COURT became a farmhouse, and fell into partial decay. It has been restored during the present century, the new building incorporating some of the charming fifteenth-century house. A beautiful "barley-sugar" chimney-stack is still there, too. It was only in recent years that one of the secret rooms the Court contains was discovered, and it was probably devised by the ingenious Father Owen. A corner of one of the attic bedrooms, of apparently solid timber and plaster, swings open on hidden pivots to reveal a priests' hole of quite comfortable dimensions, being twelve feet long, ten wide, and seven high.

The Court is still in very good structural condition. It is now occupied by a family who had nothing to do with any of the Gunpowder Plot conspirators.

The Winters also formerly owned BADGECOURT, at Elmbridge. This also is privately owned, and in very good condition.

GAYHURST, which once belonged to Drake for a day, and to the Digby family, is now a boys' school.

After Sir Everard Digby had been dragged on a hurdle to the scaffold outside St Paul's, and hanged there, in January 1606, his wife was allowed to stay at Gayhurst with her two small boys. One of them was afterwards knighted, and as Sir Kenelm Digby became famous as an astrologer, as a duellist who killed a Frenchman who made an unflattering remark about Charles I, and as the husband of the beautiful Venetia Stanley. Sir Kenelm combined staunch Royalism with an enthusiasm for scientific research, and he is credited with being the first person to recognize the importance of oxygen (which he called "vital air") to plants. He was also one of the first to maintain a sceptical attitude towards witchcraft—though he was not prepared to deny the existence of witchcraft too dogmatically.

In 1946 COUGHTON COURT,* together with 146 acres, was given to the National Trust by Sir Robert Throckmorton, subject to a lease. It stands on the edge of what was once the romantic Forest of Arden, at the end of a wide avenue of elms. The Throckmorton family has lived there for five and a half centuries.

The Gatehouse, where Lady Digby awaited the news of the Gunpowder Plot with the Jesuit Father Garnet (the head of the Jesuits in England) and Father Tesimond (sometimes known as Greenway), is the chief feature of the Court. It was built in Henry VIII's reign.

On hearing the news of the failure of the Plot Father Garnet fled to HINDLIP HALL, the Worcestershire home of Thomas Habington, who, like Tresham, was a brother-in-law of Lord Mounteagle. Father Nicholas Owen, the deviser of priests' holes, also went into hiding at Hindlip, together with one or two other priests.

Hindlip had been specially built by Thomas Habington's father to contain a network of hiding-places, and there was scarcely a room that did not conceal another, or hide a secret exit. It was a rambling house of tall gables, turrets, and tall chimneys, packed with secret passages, hidden trap-doors, secret stairways, false ceilings, and double flue chimneys.

Garnet felt he would be as safe there as anywhere. But by the middle of January Hindlip was infested with soldiers. They ransacked the whole place, pulling up floors, tearing down walls, and probing behind doors and wainscoting. They patrolled the staircases and guarded all the doors and windows. They found poor Father Owen and his companion, but they found no trace of Garnet. He was hidden in one of the double chimneys that backed on to the gentlewomen's chamber. A tiny hole in the brickwork allowed a quill or reed to be passed through, and by

this means Mrs Habington was able to give the fugitive a little warm broth every day. But after eleven days Garnet was forced to surrender. He staggered out, looking more like a ghost than a man, and, almost fainting with exhaustion, stumbled into the arms of the astonished soldiers.

They sent him to the Tower, where he arrived on the very day that Digby, Robert Winter, Grant, and Bates were executed. Garnet himself was hanged, drawn, and quartered in St Paul's Churchyard a few months later.

Father Owen's capture was greeted with enthusiastic delight by Cecil, who was well aware of the little man's great skill as an architect and builder. When Owen was discovered at Hindlip, Cecil wrote that he hoped for a "great booty of priests," and ordered that Owen was "to be coaxed if he be willing to contract for his life." But, he added dourly, "the secret must be wrung from him." But Father Owen defeated his enemies. He died of torture without revealing his hundreds of secrets.

Thomas Habington, for his part in the concealment of the priests, was arrested, and ordered not to leave Worcestershire for the rest of his life. He was then forty-seven, and lived another forty years. During that time he visited every hamlet, village, town, and settlement in the county, collecting an immense amount of material on every aspect of its history and life. Much of it is now in the British Museum.

Hindlip Hall itself was pulled down early in the nineteenth century, and not a trace of the romantic old house now remains.

Father Tesimond, the other Jesuit priest who waited for news of the Plot at Coughton Court, was more fortunate than Father Garnet. Instead of fleeing from his enemies, he fled towards them, and made his way to London. There he saw a proclamation affixed to a wall, describing him as a fugitive. While he was reading it, with natural curiosity, a passer-by recognized him and tried to arrest him. Tesimond shook himself free, and escaped to the coast, where sympathizers smuggled him out of the country in a cargo-boat going to Calais.

Coughton Court came into the news again during the Civil Wars, when it was besieged by the Roundheads. The Throckmortons and their valiant servants tried to protect the building by hanging mattresses out of the windows, but in spite of their optimistic efforts the Court was sacked, set on fire, and badly damaged. It was repaired and partly replanned after the Restoration.

In June 1811 one of the Throckmorton family, Sir John, laid the famous wager of 1000 guineas that wool still on a sheep's back at

sunrise could be made into a "well woven, properly made coat" before sunset on the same day.

The day chosen for the contest was June 25, and before 5 A.M. Sir John tramped past the cottages with his shepherd and two sheep, on their way to John Coxeter's water-driven Greenham Mill. While the shepherd sheared the sheep a tailor took Sir John's measurements. The wool was washed, stubbed, roved, spun, and woven—by John Coxeter's son, young John, the fastest man on the loom (a hand-loom, of course). The cloth was then scoured, fullled, tented, raised, sheared, dyed, and dressed—and all this was completed within eleven hours of the arrival of the sheep at the mill.

The finished cloth was then given to the tailor and his nine men. For two hours they cut, stitched, pressed, and sewed on buttons, and at 6.20 P.M. John Coxeter triumphantly presented the "well woven, properly made" hunting-coat to Sir John. He put it on in front of an excited crowd of 5000, who admired its rich damson-plum colour. They celebrated his victory by eating two sheep roasted whole and drinking 120 gallons of good strong beer. The bet was won with nearly an hour and three-quarters to spare, and Sir John himself celebrated by wearing the coat to a special dinner for forty guests.

The coat is now displayed at Coughton Court.

The half-timbered, beautiful old manor, with its gables and leaded lattices, is rich in historical associations and relics. One of them is a chemise embroidered in red silk with a Latin inscription saying it belonged to "The holy martyr, Mary Queen of Scots." The Queen wore it when she was executed at Fotheringay, and the red stains upon it are said to be drops of her blood. There is also a beautiful purple velvet cope embroidered with seraphim and flowers by Catherine of Aragon, and pictures of dozens of famous Throckmortons, including Bessie, lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth, who so angered her Majesty by her secret marriage to Sir Walter Raleigh.

COLDHAM HALL, once owned by Ambrose Rookwood, is still in a good state of preservation, and is privately owned. The church at Stanningfield has a canopied altar tomb to Thomas Rokewode, a member of the Rookwood family which built the Hall in 1574.

CLOPTON HOUSE,* which is open to the public every day, belongs to Lady Beecham. It was a house well known to Shakespeare, who was a friend of the Clopton family. Legend, indeed, connects Shakespeare very strongly with the house. One legend says that he was married in a little chapel adjoining an attic at the top of the house, known as the

"Ghost Room." A priest was murdered there, and drops of his blood still stain the floorboards.

In a spring at the end of the garden Margaret Clopton is said to have drowned herself, and the story goes that from this tragedy sprang Shakespeare's inspiration for the death of Ophelia.

Another legend concerns Charlotte Clopton. During the Plague of 1564 Charlotte was placed in the family vault. But she was not dead; she awoke. But she was found dead, standing by the gates of the vault, and legend says that this tragedy was the inspiration for the death of Juliet.

Clopton House contains some fine portraits, including one of Shakespeare and one of Sir Walter Raleigh.

RUSHTON HALL, once owned by Francis Tresham, the fickle and fearful man, is still a beautiful mansion. During the last War it was used by the War Office as an O.C.T.U., but it has now been empty for some years.

HOLBEACH HOUSE has been extensively altered since the days of the Gunpowder Plot and the grim siege which ended so disastrously. In fact, the only portion of the original building still standing is said to be part of a chimney. Since the days of the Lytteltons the house has been occupied by the families of Bendy, Peshall, Hodgetts, Cope, Dudding, and Pitt.

Both Stephen and Humphrey Lyttelton were hanged for their part in the Gunpowder Plot, and old HAGLEY HALL was pulled down in the middle of the eighteenth century. All that remains of the half-timbered, picturesque house of overhanging gables is a fine Jacobean chimney-piece incorporated into the study in the new Hall.

On Christmas Eve, 1925, a disastrous fire which burnt for two and a half days destroyed two-thirds of the building, but most of the treasures were saved.

The father of the present Lord Cobham (the head of the Lyttelton family) restored the house, which stands in a magnificent and romantic park.

NEIGHBOURING PLEASURES

The most important 'neighbouring pleasure' there could be for any district is STRATFORD-ON-AVON. It is a place that must be seen and inspected, not just read about, for it has something—and perhaps

something different—to offer every one. It is a very ancient place of settlement, for there was a monastery there three centuries before the Norman Conquest. But everything in Stratford, all its beauties, all its famous people, is overshadowed by the fact that it was Shakespeare's birthplace.

His birthplace is still there, and the little charity school he attended when he was a small boy. The house where he was born (now owned and maintained by the Shakespeare Trustees) has been restored as nearly as possible to the house that Shakespeare knew, and contains countless Shakespearian treasures. It is open to the public.

The house to which Shakespeare returned after living so many years in London has disappeared. It was rebuilt in 1702, but destroyed by Pastor Gastrell, of Cheshire, who bought the house later on. First he cut down the mulberry-tree Shakespeare had planted. He objected to people admiring it over his wall. Then he quarrelled with the authorities over taxes, and with the townsfolk over everything and nothing, and—out of pure spite—he pulled down the house. He left Stratford under a battery of well-earned curses.

A little way out of Stratford-on-Avon is Anne Hathaway's Cottage, standing in its old garden at Shottery just as it did when Shakespeare was courting Anne. The cottage contains an old carved double bed that has not been out of the house for four hundred years.

The Memorial Theatre is there to be inspected too, with its theatre, picture-gallery, museum, and library—and the church where Shakespeare is buried.

He was born and died on St George's Day.

All these places are written up fully and often in guide-books. What is said here is merely to whet your appetite.

Lovely old HARVARD HOUSE* is another of Stratford-on-Avon's pleasures and delights. It is a restored half-timbered house, with overhanging upper storeys and leaded windows. It was a new house in 1596, when Shakespeare returned to Stratford, famous. It had been built for Thomas and Alice Rogers, whose daughter Katherine married Robert Harvard, a butcher of Southwark, in 1605. Two years later John Harvard was born. When still a young man he migrated to America as a Puritan minister, but he died not long afterwards, leaving £779 17s. 2d. (half his estate) and 320 books for the college then being founded. It was called Harvard in his honour. Like William Penn,¹ John Harvard married a Ringmer girl—Ann Saddler, daughter of the incumbent John Saddler.

¹ See Chapter III, under Arundel, in neighbouring Pleasures.

Harvard House in Stratford-on-Avon was presented to Harvard University in 1909 as a "house of call" for Americans visiting the city. Thousands upon thousand of tourists visit Stratford-on-Avon every year from all parts of the world. But most of the visitors are Americans. They average about 25,000 a year.

The house and grounds of CHARLECOTE PARK,* four miles from Stratford-on-Avon, were given to the National Trust in 1946 by Sir Montgomerie Fairfax-Lucy, and both are open to the public most days between April and September. The Lucy¹ family have been connected with the property since the twelfth century.

Charlecote has a long and vigorous association with Shakespeare, and the Park still contains the famous "Shakespeare" herd of fallow deer, and a flock of Spanish sheep of rare breed whose ancestors were taken to Charlecote by a Lucy some two hundred years ago.

The present house was built in the traditional E plan, by the yellow-bearded Sir Thomas Lucy, who pulled down the old mansion and rebuilt it in Elizabeth's reign. He entertained the Queen there to breakfast one day in 1576, when she was on her way to see her favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.² The house has been considerably altered since Sir Thomas's days, but the gatehouse is exactly as Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth knew it.

Shakespeare is supposed to have been arraigned before Sir Thomas Lucy when he was caught on a midnight poaching expedition in the Park. For the rest of the night he was kept a prisoner in the Great Hall, "held over" for interrogation, or possibly for punishment. Stories differ a good deal. Some say Shakespeare retaliated by writing a rude poem about Sir Thomas, and affixing it to the gates, a revenge which so infuriated the knight that Shakespeare deemed it prudent to hasten to London and "disappear" for a time. Legend also says that Shakespeare had the final revenge—by satirizing Sir Thomas as Justice Shallow in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and in *Henry IV, Part Two*.

A widow of one of the Lucy family of Charlecote, Captain Lucy of the Royal Horse Guards, had a strange and troublesome adventure with two of Charles II's illegitimate sons by Barbara Castlemaine—Henry, Duke of Grafton,³ and George, Duke of Northumberland.

Northumberland had married Catherine Lucy, the Captain's widow, for she was very pretty, and had insisted on matrimony. But within a year he had grown tired of her. He and his brother (a young man who not only welcomed but sought out adventure) put their heads together

¹ See Chapter VII, under Bentley Hall.

² See Chapter III and Chapter V.

³ See Chapters VI and IX.

and decided to kidnap Catherine and take her to the Continent. They inveigled her on to a yacht, and, in spite of her protests, set off across the Channel and deposited her, willy-nilly, in a convent in Ghent. The Mother Superior, with a little nudging from the Bishop, obliged the brothers by certifying that Catherine had entered the convent of her own free will. But Catherine was a young woman of determination, and a good match for the brothers. She escaped from the convent, and turned up in London just when Henry and George were congratulating themselves on the success of their scheme. Scandal was already flying abroad, and Northumberland, to save his face, was forced to come to terms.

HIDCOTE MANOR GARDEN,* near Chipping Norton, secluded and remote in the lovely Cotswold countryside, is one of the most beautiful of English gardens, and it has all been created in one man's lifetime. The garden was the first to be acquired for preservation under the joint auspices of the National Trust and the Royal Horticultural Society. The manor house, a charming building in the Cotswold style, with a chapel on one side, is not open to the public, but the garden, which was created by the donor, Major Lawrence Johnston, is open three days a week between March and November. It is indeed one of England's masterpieces.

When Major Johnston acquired Hidcote more than forty years ago there was nothing in his 'garden' but one fine old cedar-tree and some beeches. The rest was open fields. But the garden now contains a magnificent collection of rare plants and shrubs, as well as the old 'cottage garden' favourites—roses, hydrangeas, primroses, lavender—and primulas beside the stream. There are new favourites and rock gardens as well, all set off by wide grass walks and clipped hedges of yew, holly and copper beech, and a topiary of yew and box.

The garden is really a series of gardens, one opening out of the other, with beauty and originality and loveliness on every side. It is a ten-acre garden, splashed with colour in every corner. It is part of a delightful estate of 289 acres which includes a farm, a tiny hamlet of thatched-roofed cottages, and charming cottage gardens.

HARVINGTON HALL,* in Worcestershire, which belongs to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham (the city is about twenty miles away), provides a wonderfully interesting link with the days of Roman Catholic persecution, for it contains a number of ingenious hiding-places very similar to those used by the Jesuit priests at the time of the Gunpowder Plot. As the Hall is open to the public almost every day

of the week, the hide-outs can be examined, provided, that is, that, like the priests, you are the lean and hungry type!

Although the secret places in Harvington Hall are so like those constructed by the redoubtable Nicholas Owen, he was racked to death while the Hall was still owned by Protestants. They had no part in the Plot, and probably little sympathy for the Plotters, but Mary, a daughter of Humphrey Abington, who owned Harvington Hall at the time, turned Roman Catholic on her marriage to Sir John Yate. The priests' holes were probably made during her long lifetime, and very possibly were devised by men who learnt their skill from Father Owen. After all, Cecil himself admitted, when he heard that Owen had been captured, that he hoped a "great booty of priests" would be winkled from the priests' holes in manors all over England. No doubt the architect-priest trained men to act as his apprentices. In any case, the secret holes at Harvington bear the mark of a master-hand. One of them is behind a movable stairboard near the head of the great staircase. Another is under a corridor leading from the reception room, and is entered by a trap-door. Yet another is behind the wall in the dining-room. Nor is this all. There is also a "swinging wall" in the library which, like that in the attic bedroom at Huddington, swings out on hidden pivots.

Mary Yate left Harvington Hall to her granddaughter, who had married into that staunch and ever-recurring Roman Catholic family the Throckmortons. Her husband was Sir Robert, of Coughton Court. They altered Harvington considerably, adding another storey, but later Throckmortons lived in the manor less and less frequently. The fine staircase was eventually taken to Coughton Court (in 1910), leaving a great empty well in the deserted Hall. Gradually it fell into a ruin of sagging roofs and crumbling walls, wrapped in a dark blanket of ivy.

In 1923 the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham bought the property from the Throckmorton family, and since then the house has been restored—and re-created—by local craftsmen. It is now once again one of the most interesting manors in the Midlands.

There is a legend in the true and proper style attached to Cook's FOLLY, a tower and mansion which once stood on a romantic site on the banks of the Avon. Cook, who seems to have had no title or Christian name, crossed a gipsy's palm with silver, and learnt to his dismay that his only son would die of violence before he was twenty-one. Mr Cook hurried home, called in masons, and had the tower added to his mansion in an effort to defeat destiny. That was in 1693.

In the tower Mr Cook shut up his son, and said he was to stay there

till the danger was over. All his food and drink, his books and clothes, were drawn up in a basket to a window high in the tower by the boy himself.

The years went by, and the prisoner grew towards manhood. On the eve of his twenty-first birthday the weather turned cold, and the young man lowered his basket with a request for some firewood. The servants loaded the basket, no doubt discussing the jollifications planned for the following day. A tug on the rope as a signal, and the boy drew up the basket.

But Fate won the last round. A viper was concealed among the logs, and in the morning, when the anxious Mr Cook went to investigate the silence, his son lay dead.

COMPTON WYNYATES,* rose-red and many-gabled, is one of the loveliest examples of Tudor domestic architecture in England. It stands near Banbury, and both the house and the exquisite old garden are open to the public several days a week. It belongs to the Marquess of Northampton.

Compton Wynyates is a romantic old house, with half a dozen Tudor brick chimneys carved in different designs, reputed to be the best in the country. There is a legend, and a secret skeleton—the hint of a ghost—and secret hiding-places all connected with the old mansion. In fact, the secret hiding-places are still there.

During the Civil War some four hundred Roundhead soldiers were billeted at Compton Wynyates after it had been besieged and captured from the Compton family, and it was restored to them only on condition that they filled in the moat and destroyed the fortifications.

Some of the secret rooms had a subtle variation on the usual, for the curious hiding-places in the roof were made more secret—and more secure from discovery—by false floor-boards. These could be removed if pursuit were too near, and the pursuers left to plunge to their death far below. There is another secret hiding-place, large enough to hold six, behind the fireplace in the bathroom, and a trapdoor in the powder-closet leading directly to the moat. When alterations were being made to the house at one time a bricked-in wall was removed—and a secret skeleton discovered. There is also a room where, every morning, the window is found swinging open, though every night it is left securely shut.

The legend attached to Compton Wynyates is as charming as it should be to suit such a setting where the clipped yew-trees give an air of graceful—and sometimes comic—formality to the beautiful gardens.

Some are cut into portraits, one into a lizard-like creature climbing over a ball.

Long ago a young impoverished Compton fell in love with the daughter of a wealthy London merchant named Spencer. Though they were much in love, the father would not entertain the young man's suit, for he was much too poor, though the family was old indeed. There had been Comptons at the old manor before John signed *Magna Carta*.

Young Compton disguised himself as a baker's boy and delivered a pile of loaves in a large basket to the Spencer kitchen. He walked out again—with the girl hidden in the basket. Father Spencer was so delighted with the young man's enterprise and determination that he promptly forgave their runaway marriage, and eventually settled his huge fortune on them both.

In 1574 the first Lord Compton began building CASTLE ASHBY,* near Northampton, on land he had inherited from his grandfather, the builder of Compton Wynyates. The same legend told of Compton Wynyates is also told of Castle Ashby, which seems singularly economical for 'stately homes.' Castle Ashby, in spite of Georgian and Victorian additions and restorations, retains its Jacobean ceilings, staircases and panelling, and fine galleries of paintings by Reynolds, Romney, Lawrence, Rubens, and Van Dyck.

The Marquess of Northampton owns Castle Ashby as well as Compton Wynyates. The castle is open to the public several times a week between May and September.

PACKWOOD HOUSE,* at Hockley Heath, on the main road from Birmingham to Stratford-on-Avon, has a yew garden even more remarkable than the one at Compton Wynyates. It was planted in 1650 to represent the Sermon on the Mount. The many-gabled Tudor House was given to the National Trust in 1941, with a fine collection of tapestry, needlework, and furniture. Both Packwood House and the gardens are open to the public several days a week, except in October.

A few miles from Coldham Hall stands the ancient, moated RUSHBROOKE HALL, which is associated with stories of two queens—Elizabeth, who stayed there as the guest of Sir Robert Jermyn, and Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I, whom gossip is said to have married secretly a later owner, Henry Jermyn, Earl of St Albans. But that is a story that has never been proved.

Two cabinets in the Hall once belonged to Henrietta Maria, and

mementoes of Queen Elizabeth include a mother-of-pearl chest and the bed on which she slept.

Henry Jermyn, Earl of St Albans, was always a great favourite of Henrietta Maria, and, though at one time he was in disgrace for refusing to marry one of the maids-of-honour after seducing her, the Queen appointed him her Master of the Horse. During the Court's exile in France, Jermyn acted as the Queen's secretary, and infuriated Edward Hyde (later the Earl of Clarendon¹) by his financial "manipulations." Jermyn had neither personal nor political scruples, and, while the young King's chief Ministers were living hungrily at the rate of one pistole a week, Jermyn managed to keep an expensive table—and a carriage—and lived "full of soup and gold." After the Restoration Jermyn devoted himself largely to the pleasures of gambling and eating, both of which he enjoyed till he was a ripe old eighty, and nearly blind.

His memorial is in St James's Square, London, which he planned, and in Jermyn Street, which is named after him.

All Jermyn's wealth passed to his nephew, another Henry Jermyn, whom he adopted, and who followed his uncle in his fondness for debauchery and gaming. This younger Jermyn was a grotesquely ugly little man, but he had countless successes with the ladies for all that. He was one of Lady Shrewsbury's² string of lovers before she and the second Duke of Buckingham joined forces, and he fought a duel over her with another of her many admirers. Later he was banished from Court for a while by the King for his attentions to Barbara Castlemaine. Pepys recorded in his *Diary*: "The King is mad at her entertaining Jermyn, and she is mad at Jermyn's going to marry away from her, so they are all mad; and thus the kingdom is governed."

To the south of Coldham Hall lie two of the most famous scenes of haunting in England—BORLEY and POLSTEAD—though Polstead is famous more for a 'dream' haunting than for a more material one.

Borley Rectory is notorious, for it has been the subject of several books, including Harry Price's *The Most Haunted House in England* and *The End of Borley Rectory*. Harry Price himself leased the house for a year from May 1937, and experienced many alarming and inexplicable hauntings and manifestations. Long before that, however, tenants had complained of "ghostly footsteps," "horrible noises," wine turning into ink, lumps of stone on the staircase, black eyes, and the ringing of

¹ See Chapter V, under Kenilworth and Cornbury Park, and Chapter VIII.

² See Chapter I.

the house bells though the wires had all been cut. It is not surprising that some of the tenants were forced out of occupation. It is more surprising that any stayed. The Rev. L. A. Foyster and his wife stayed five years, though (among other pleasantries) Mrs Foyster was hurled from her bed, her husband was pelted with stones, and doors suddenly locked themselves. The Foysters were among the last tenants.

Apart from such mischiefs, Borley Rectory was also haunted by a nun, a black hand, a headless man, and a girl in blue. Several people also saw a coach and horses sweep across the Rectory grounds, rise up, and disappear into thin air. All this went on to a background accompaniment of scratchings, whisperings, strange patches of coldness, pleasant and unpleasant smells, rappings and tappings, the sound of rushing water—and wall-writings. These wall-writings were a unique feature of the haunting of Borley. They were often frantic messages for help.

During Harry Price's tenancy some friends and fellow-investigators "discovered" during a séance that the name of the haunting nun was Marie Lairre, who said she had been strangled in 1667. A few female bones were discovered at the rectory, and given Christian burial by the rector, but though the rectory was totally destroyed by fire in 1939, the hauntings did not cease. Builders removed every brick and stone of the burnt-out remains, but the hauntings transferred themselves to Borley Church, where the organ played in a locked and empty church, and then to Foxearth Rectory and Church, about a mile away. Here doors were opened by an unseen hand, and the church-bells rung by unseen ringers.

The story of Harry Price's investigations at Borley and elsewhere is very fully told in *Harry Price, the Biography of a Ghost Hunter*, by Paul Tabori.

POLSTEAD, which lies to the east of Borley, has long been famous as the home of Maria Marten, the true-life, wronged heroine immortalized in the old melodrama *Murder in the Red Barn*. Maria fell in love with William Corder, the worthless son of a wealthy farmer. With promises of marriage, she consented to become his mistress, but when she pressed him to name the day he put her off with one excuse after another. At last, however, he told her to meet him in the Red Barn on his father's property, and he would take her to Ipswich and marry her there—in secret, he said, because of his parents' opposition. Maria ran out of her father's home without saying a word to anyone. She was never seen alive again. Young William Corder went to London, and from there he wrote reassuring letters to Maria's parents. But three times one night

her mother had the same vivid and horrible dream. The dream was so alarming that Mrs Marten woke her husband, and, in spite of his protestations that it was "only a dream," persuaded him to go and investigate the Red Barn. There, in exactly the spot shown in the dream, Maria Marten's body was found. William Corder was arrested in London, where the case excited the greatest interest on account of Mrs Marten's strange experience. Corder eventually confessed—and paid the penalty.

Perhaps the prevalence of ghosts in Suffolk has some connexion with the witch hunts the "Witch Finder Generall" Matthew Hopkins conducted there with such ferocious success during the seventeenth century. Hopkins went on circuit like a judge, from one town to another, hunting out the unfortunate creatures and charging twenty shillings a town "to maintaine his companie with three horses." His "companie" were two attendants or confederates from his home town of MANNINGTREE, where he had already dealt with six or seven witches before taking up witch-hunting in a big way. He accused his local ones of having sent a bear to kill him in his garden! Besides his twenty shillings a town for expenses, Hopkins was paid handsomely for results. He was paid £23 at Stowmarket, and probably a great deal more at Bury St Edmunds, where he had forty witches condemned and executed, including an aged, bewildered, and innocent clergyman. Altogether he was responsible for hundreds—several hundreds—of deaths before he was finally paid out in his own coin and discredited for ever.

James I, who once so staunchly believed in witchcraft (as did his favourite, the first Duke of Buckingham¹), was largely responsible for the terrified zeal with which people denounced any neighbour with a squint or a nutcracker jaw. And though James came to realize that the belief in witchcraft was based on nothing more substantial than superstition, plus hysteria garnished with personal dislike, and that the evidence against witches was often based on nothing but lies, he could not put a brake on other people's ideas as easily as he had given them encouragement. It was many years before the hunts and persecutions finally died out.

As the hauntings at Borley Rectory and Foxearth seem to prove, ghosts do not only belong to the dead and aged past. In December 1953 a family living near BURY ST EDMUNDS revealed that five times during the previous two years the ghostly figure of a "benign priest" had been seen. He appeared three times in their drawing-room (once a private chapel), once on the path leading to the church, and once in the church

¹ See Chapter I.

itself. The people who saw the ghost believe that he was the last priest to know where St Edmund was reburied.

King Edmund, of East Anglia, was martyred in A.D. 870. According to legend, his body was enshrined in a golden coffin at the Benedictine Abbey at Bury St Edmunds. It disappeared at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Edmund was crowned king in 855. In 870 the Danes overran the country, led by two brothers, Ingvar and Hubba. A fierce battle took place at Hoxne (pronounced Hoxen), and after great slaughter on both sides Hubba suggested that Edmund should become his vassal and share his treasures and dominions. Edmund refused such an offer, but, to save further bloodshed, he surrendered to the Danes.

Angered by his refusal of Hubba's offer, the Danes bound the King to a tree and slew him with arrows. His head they cut off and threw into the thickest part of the surrounding woods. But Edmund's loyal followers, anxious to give the King a decent burial, set out to find the head. As one party became separated from another in the dense woods, they cried out, "Where are you?" but each time it was the King's severed head that replied, "Here! Here! Here!" In fact, the martyred King's head

Never ceased of all that long day
So for to cry tyl they cam where he lay.

When the soldiers discovered the King's head it was being reverently held between his forefeet by a wolf. He politely gave it up to the men, and as soon as the head touched the body the body became whole again.

The wolf attended the funeral of King Edmund, whose death is commemorated at Hoxne by an obelisk surmounted by a cross. The oak-tree to which he was tied fell in August 1848 "by its own weight." Near by is an Elizabethan farmhouse, standing on the site of a little wooden chapel in which St Edmund's body lay before being taken for burial in the Benedictine Abbey.

According to Dr Margaret Murray, president of the Folk-lore Society in London, Britain's ghost population is only a fraction of its former self. The cause of the decline and disappearance of this shady population she blamed on heavier traffic and better street lighting. Nevertheless, a number of ghosts besides the supposed monk of Bury St Edmunds have been seen recently. Warwickshire people say that the ghostly Battle of Edgehill¹ is still fought occasionally at Kineton, and that ghostly voices and ghostly lanterns have been seen in the churchyard at Warmington. The ghost of a soldier of the Black Watch

¹ See Chapter VII, under Neighbouring Pleasures.

has been seen in a three-hundred year-old inn at Maidstone, Kent, and two ghosts have been seen at another old inn, the disused Jolly Collier, at Dudley, Worcestershire. These ghosts are a flaxen-haired, white-robed girl and a prosaic bald man in a brown suit. And the caretaker of the Yorkshire Museum at York has seen the ghost of an elderly man in Edwardian dress walk along a corridor in the Museum—and vanish. The same caretaker and other people also saw a haunted book. It was taken from a shelf in the Museum by an unseen hand and dropped on the floor.

A spring at BARTON MERE, near Bury St Edmunds, used to rise and fall with the price of corn.

Ghosts may not belong entirely to the aged and magical past. Magical springs, like mermaids, always seem to, alas!

Love and Hatred of a Queen

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

ELIZABETH I is the principal character in this chapter. She appears both as a princess at ASHRIDGE, Hertfordshire, and at HATFIELD,* also in Hertfordshire, and as a Queen, rewarding her childhood friend and lover,

ROBERT DUDLEY, EARL OF LEICESTER, with position, money, and estates, including KENILWORTH CASTLE.* He was the son of the Duke of Northumberland, who had been executed for the plot to put Lady Jane Grey on the throne. He was the uncle of the poet and happy warrior

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY, of PENSHURST,* Kent, and the stepfather of Elizabeth's young lover,

ROBERT DEVEREAUX, EARL OF ESSEX, of CHARTLEY HALL, Staffordshire. Essex's mother was Elizabeth's beautiful and much hated (by her) cousin

LETTICE KNOLLYS, the daughter of Mary Boleyn by her second husband. Elizabeth had been imprisoned in the Tower at the same time as Robert Dudley, following the rebellion led by

SIR THOMAS WYATT, son of the poet

SIR THOMAS WYATT, of ALLINGTON CASTLE, Kent, who had loved—and perhaps been the lover of—Anne Boleyn.

Perhaps Elizabeth first fell in love with Robert Dudley during their imprisonment in the Tower. But he was already married to

AMY ROBSART, a somewhat dreary though wealthy heiress from SYDERSTONE HALL, Norfolk. Gossip declared that Elizabeth and Robert would marry if only Amy were out of the way, and she did die in mysterious circumstances at CUMNOR HALL, Oxfordshire.

Young Philip Sidney had married

FRANCES WALSHINGHAM, the placid, quite unremarkable daughter of Elizabeth's "master spy," the fiercely anti-Catholic

SIR FRANCIS WALSHINGHAM, who plotted the final destruction of

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS when she was imprisoned in Essex's Staffordshire home, Chartley. After enough evidence had been found (or "planted") she was taken to FOTHERINGAY CASTLE,* in Northamptonshire, for trial and execution.

Elizabeth had created Robert Dudley Earl of Leicester, and proposed him as a husband for Mary; but Mary married

HENRY STUART, EARL OF DARNLEY, grandson of Henry VIII's sister Margaret, Queen of Scotland, and therefore possessing a vague claim to both the Scottish and the English thrones. His younger brother,

- CHARLES STUART, was married willy-nilly by the scheming
BESS OF HARDWICK to one of her daughters by her second husband,
SIR WILLIAM CAVENDISH, by whom she had six children. Cavendish built the
great house of CHATSWORTH,* in Derbyshire, for Bess, who herself
built four other mansions, including HARDWICK HOUSE.* Bess was
married four times. Her last husband was the kindly
GEORGE TALBOT, SIXTH EARL OF SHREWSBURY. He began by calling her his
"chieftest" blessing, and ended by despising himself for marrying one
with so "divelish a desposition."
Elizabeth's and Leicester's love was lit by quarrels as brilliant as their
personalities. While Elizabeth was toying with one of her Gentlemen-of-
the-Bedchamber Leicester, in a huff, married (or did not marry)
DOUGLASS SHEFFIELD, by whom he had a son, another
ROBERT DUDLEY. He later scandalized every one by fleeing from his wife and
daughters, eloping to Italy with his beautiful cousin. In Italy he made a
remarkable career for himself as a ship-builder and engineer.
The Court of the Star Chamber decided against Douglass Sheffield's claim
to have married Leicester. Leicester's only legitimate child was a little
hunchback boy known as
"THE NOBLE IMPE," who died when he was little more than a baby. A tiny
suit of armour made for the child is preserved at WARWICK CASTLE,*
then owned by Leicester's eldest surviving brother,
AMBROSE DUDLEY, who, like Leicester himself, had once been condemned to
death for complicity in his father's plot in favour of Lady Jane Grey.



V

This chapter tells something of the story of the great Elizabeth, and of the two men, father and stepson, whom she loved beyond all others—Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex.

The threads of the story wind across England, entangling two Queens in intrigue, and hatred, and in two personal and very different tragedies. For one Queen her own story ended on the scaffold. For the other the scaffold brought death to her lover.

Across the stage stride or flit some of the most interesting of the Elizabethans, from the gallant Sir Philip Sidney to the little "master spy," Sir Francis Walsingham, father-in-law to both Sidney and to Elizabeth's young lover, Essex, and arch-enemy to the beautiful Mary Queen of Scots.

Most flamboyant, most spectacular, most successful of them all, was Robert Dudley, Elizabeth's "Sweet Robin."

Robert Dudley's father, John, had been a great favourite at the Court of Henry VIII, though no Dudley was ever popular with the general public. Apart from his prowess in the tiltyard, which naturally endeared him to the King, John was an able commander on both land and sea. He and his family were soon installed at Court, and Robert, who was about the same age as Elizabeth, was given a share in both her play and studies.

When Robert's father, by then the Duke of Northumberland, was executed for his attempt to put Lady Jane Grey on the throne Robert was one of the five Dudley brothers to face imprisonment—and probable death.¹

It was during this day-by-day life of vast uncertainty that Robert met Elizabeth² again, in circumstances so different from those meetings of childhood days. She had been sent to the Tower by her half-sister, Queen Mary, for allegedly encouraging Sir Thomas Wyatt to raise a rebellion, for the purpose of marrying her to young Edward Courtenay, Earl of Devon (the White Rose heir), and place her on the throne instead of Mary.

Sir Thomas Wyatt was the son of Sir Thomas Wyatt the poet,

¹ See Chapter III.

² See Chapter IX.

one of the men who had loved Anne Boleyn so dearly. He lived at ALLINGTON CASTLE,* near Maidstone, not far from Anne's childhood home of HEVER.¹ Thomas the younger had accompanied his father to Spain, and he had been so appalled at the Spaniards' cruelty and religious bigotry that he was ready to risk everything to prevent the acceptance of a Spanish prince in England, and therefore Mary's marriage to Philip of Spain.

The lives of the Wyatts, father and son, were curiously, and dangerously, interwoven with those of a mother and daughter—Anne Boleyn and Elizabeth. Sir Thomas the elder always loved Anne. They were suspect by Henry VIII—a suspicion which added strength to those which sent Anne² to the scaffold. Perhaps in this case Henry's suspicions were correct, for it is likely that Sir Thomas the poet was Anne's lover. In one of his poems he wrote:

Forget not then thine own approved,
The which so long hath thee so loved,
Whose steadfast faith yet never moved:
Forget not thus!

Sir Thomas the younger almost cost Elizabeth her red head when his rebellion failed so dismally—and so soon. In any case he was probably the instrument of fate which looped the skeins of her life so firmly into the fitfully brilliant tapestry of Robert Dudley's.

Allington Castle, where the Wyatts lived, had been in their family since 1492. The poet's father, Sir Henry Wyatt, lost seventeen manors and his liberty for plotting against Richard III in favour of Henry of Richmond. Legend says he was kept alive in the Tower by a friendly cat which used to take him a dove every day from a neighbouring dovecot. "For this," says an old record, "he would ever make much of cats, as other men will of their spaniels or hounds."

Which was understandable enough.

Henry Wyatt was released from the Tower, knighted, and had his estates returned when Henry of Richmond defeated Richard III and became Henry VII.

Now his grandson, full of courage and enthusiasm, was plotting to put Elizabeth on the throne. He made his headquarters in the ruins of Rochester Castle, not many miles from his old home. But lack of planning and a divergence of ideals among the leaders predestined the rebellion to disaster. Wyatt was sent to the Tower

¹ See Chapter III.

² Ibid.

and promptly executed, declaring emphatically that neither Elizabeth nor Courtenay had any knowledge of the plot. But Mary was suspicious and summoned Elizabeth to London from the manor of ASHRIDGE, Hertfordshire, one of Elizabeth's estates. She too was sent to the Tower.

As she reached the Traitor's Gate Elizabeth showed fear for the first and last time in her life. She sank down on the steps weeping bitterly, and refused to enter the grim old building. For too many prisoners there had been a one-way traffic at the Tower, and Elizabeth was frankly terrified. Eventually her escort managed to coax her out of the pouring rain into the Tower, and it was not long before she and Robert Dudley had found the means to meet. According to a legend which had taken firm root in his own lifetime, it was in the Tower that Robert first made love to Elizabeth, and in the Tower that she first gave him her heart. They had much in common, these two prisoners. They were both young, both wayward, quick-witted, full of life and fond of life, and they both knew only too well that for them there might be no to-morrow.

Robert was already married, to the dull, extravagant, featureless Amy Robsart, who was later to meet her death in such strange circumstances. His father had made as powerful and judicious marriages for his children as possible, and, besides marrying his son Guildford to Lady Jane Grey, he married his daughter Mary to the King's closest friend, young Henry Sidney of PENSURST,* Kent, and Robert, who was seventeen, to the seventeen-year-old Amy Robsart. She was the only daughter and heiress of Sir John Robsart, a wealthy landowner, and lord of the manor of SYDERSTONE HALL, Norfolk, now demolished.

After the wedding in 1550 Robert became a country squire for some time on Sir John's estates, learning the management of men and property that was so invaluable to him later on. Occasional trips to Court (without Amy) kept him in touch with men of affairs, and inevitably he became involved in his father's plot to put his Protestant daughter-in-law, Lady Jane Grey,¹ on the throne in the place of the Roman Catholic Mary.

Amy Robsart seems to have been lacking both in personality and in brains. She was totally colourless. She was very spoilt, being much the youngest of the household, and because she was a wealthy man's heir. Her mother already had four children, and Sir John an illegitimate son, and Amy grew up illiterate, unskilled, uninteresting—and sterile.

¹ See Chapter III.

The Dudley fortunes had, of course, been ruined on their father's execution. For some years Robert and Amy were dependent on her father's generosity, a position distasteful to them both—to Amy because she was extravagant and liked buying countless feminine luxuries, to Robert because he was ambitious and independent. However, after he and his two remaining brothers, Ambrose and Henry, had all fought with distinction in the war against France, Mary consented to lift the attainder. Ambrose, as the eldest surviving brother, became Earl of Warwick. The Dudley fortunes were on the mend again, but Henry, who had married Margaret Audley of AUDLEY END,¹ Essex, was killed in the war.

When Elizabeth was released from the Tower after the Wyatt rebellion she was sent to live in semi-imprisonment at HATFIELD HOUSE,* under the guardianship of Sir Thomas Pope, founder of Trinity College, Oxford. A few years later, when Mary was dying of intermittent fever (and perhaps of a broken heart at Philip's desertion and of disappointment at bearing no child), Hatfield House on an instant became more of a Court than St James's Palace, where Mary was. Elizabeth had always known considerable splendour at Hatfield, for the sensible Sir Thomas Pope realized that he had a future Queen in his charge, and that it behoved him to keep in with her. He devised lavish pageants and entertainments, including bear-baiting, and great hunting expeditions for her delight. On one of these expeditions Elizabeth rode forth attended by "a retinue of twelve ladies, clothed in white sattin, on ambling palfries, and twenty yeomen in green all on horseback." The party was met by "fifty archers in scarlet boots and yellow caps, armed with gold bows," and the young Princess was given a silver-headed arrow winged with peacock-feathers.

A goodly imprisonment indeed.

Now, as Mary lay dying, Elizabeth waited at Hatfield, expectantly, and with excitement. Courtiers flocked out from London to pay her court. And one of them was Robert Dudley. Remembering his old childhood friendship with Elizabeth, remembering his love-making in the dangerous privacy of the Tower, and, no doubt, remembering his own ambition as well, he sold some of his property, and sent the proceeds to the Princess in case she should have to fight for the throne. As Elizabeth sat under an oak in the park at Hatfield and heard the welcome news that Mary was

¹ See Chapter VI.

dead Robert Dudley rode out, "mounted on a snow-white steed; his beauty, stature and florrid youth recommended him."

Robert was a fine horseman, and the new Queen returned gesture for gesture. She appointed him her Master of the Horse. This was a fine job for a young man, with excellent pay and his own table at Court, but it was by no means a sinecure. It was his responsibility to keep an adequate supply of well-trained horses and mules for all the Court's needs, including mounts for Elizabeth—an enthusiastic rider—and heavier types of horses to draw the cumbersome carriages along the shocking country roads when the Queen went forth on her "progresses" through the country.

Robert, who was an excellent organizer, and something of an exhibitionist, relished his work as Master of the Horse. He enjoyed the prestige it gave him, riding as he did immediately behind the Queen in all processions, but he enjoyed the solid work it entailed also, and he did much to improve the English breeds of horses, then of poor quality.

By this time, when Robert was scarcely permitted to leave the Queen's side, rumours were rife. Some said she was his mistress, and certainly she loved him passionately and possessively. Others said that she would marry him—as soon as Amy Robsart was dead. Gossip said that the Queen and Robert were together plotting Amy's death, and that the Queen had said "she would be married ere six months were up." Some said that Amy was already ailing, from doses of poison sent by her husband, but others affirmed that Amy's illness was a natural one, "a malady in one of her breasts."

The unhappy Amy, who seldom saw her husband, for the Court was a masculine one except for Elizabeth's ladies, was at this time staying near Oxford, at CUMNOR HALL (now demolished), the home of Dudley's steward, Anthony Forster.

The truth about her death may never be known now, but certainly Amy acted strangely on that last morning of her life. She rose unusually early, and insisted on all the household going to the Abingdon Fair, though some protested they would prefer to go another day. When they returned Amy was lying at the foot of the stairs with a broken neck. Her maid was convinced that she had committed suicide—because of Robert's neglect, because of cancer of the breast?—but leaping down a staircase is more likely to cause injury than death. Robert's enemies said that she had been pushed down the stairs, but the same argument applies there. Robert, who realized how public opinion could damage his career,

urged a full inquiry, and he was acquitted of all complicity. But public opinion refused to believe the verdict, and the whole world waited on tenterhooks to see if Elizabeth would marry the man they deemed Amy's murderer.

Now that marriage was a possibility Elizabeth hesitated with characteristic vacillation. As a woman, she loved an arrogant, proud, masterful man—and perhaps Robert was already her masterful lover—but, as a queen, did she want such a man sharing her crown? Her affection for him still ran high, however, and when she was seriously ill with smallpox (tenderly nursed by Dudley's sister, Lady Sidney) she commanded her Ministers to make Robert Protector of the Realm if she should die. But she had too stout a heart to die so soon, and Lady Sidney was the one who was pock-marked, not she! When she recovered the Queen made Robert a Privy Councillor and gave him KENILWORTH,* which later became his favourite home.

In the meantime, while Elizabeth was vacillating and Robert was doing his utmost to prove his innocence (he made no effort to appear heartbroken), a ghostly Amy was beginning to make her presence felt in far more certain terms than she had ever accomplished in life. She wasted no time in returning to both Syderstone and Cumnor, a shadowy figure in white with a disconcerting passion for opening windows. She haunted the staircase at Cumnor (as she should) until the house was pulled down in 1810—a haunt, that is, of something like 250 years, for she was killed in 1560.

Amy's haunting of Syderstone transferred itself to the near-by rectory when her old home was demolished. Here it was she used to open windows, left locked and bolted, leaving them to flap desolately all through the night.

In the eighteenth century Syderstone became the scene of another haunt, when the village green was occupied (when the moon was full) by a ghostly, ghastly-faced highwayman in the tattered magnificence of a black velvet riding-coat and a tricorn hat. He appeared from nowhere on his ghostly horse, demanding "Your money or your life" in suitably sepulchral tones.

Amy, the persistent ghost, also appeared to her husband, many years later, to warn him of his approaching death, but that was still a long life and many triumphs away.

The seething rumours of Elizabeth's imminent marriage to Robert Dudley—her "Sweet Robin"—boiled up, and simmered

down as Elizabeth made no move. But Elizabeth herself was boiling under Mary Queen of Scots' insult that "her cousin of England was now free to marry her horsekeeper." Elizabeth bided her time, coped with smallpox, gave Robert Kenilworth, and created him Earl of Leicester (a title previously reserved for the sons of kings) for the sole purpose of raising him to a rank elevated enough to carry out her next scheme—or pretended scheme. This was to marry him to Mary Queen of Scots. (During the investiture at Westminster Elizabeth had shocked the French Ambassador by running her hand inside Dudley's collar and tickling him, though Dudley himself maintained a suitable gravity throughout the ceremony.)

Now it was Mary's turn to seethe with fury. Next to Elizabeth herself, Mary, a beautiful widow of nineteen, was by far the most eligible match in Europe. France, Spain, and Austria were all suing for her hand, and Elizabeth offered her own lover. But Mary smiled, for Elizabeth was too powerful to offend openly. Robert smiled too—grimly—and dutifully sent Mary a present of three geldings. And probably Elizabeth smiled—secretly—for she knew that Mary was interested in young Lord Darnley, a Stuart and an Englishman. Mary knew all about the Englishman's prejudice against foreigners. She hoped that an English husband would tip the scales in her favour when the time was ripe.

Elizabeth allowed young Darnley—"the long lad," as she called him—to go to Scotland, though she had previously refused him permission. She knew Mary had been manoeuvring to get him to Scotland, and no doubt listened with interest to the news that Mary had nursed him through a serious illness, and in doing so had fallen violently in love with him.

If Mary had lived in more modern times she would have been dubbed 'man-mad.' Perhaps she was even then, for, though she was beautiful, had "an alluring grace, and a pretty Scotch speech and a searching wit clouded with mildness," Mary had little sense, and no taste where men were concerned.

Perhaps her childhood marriage to the weak young Dauphin was responsible; perhaps her upbringing, from the time she was six, at the French Court. She was certainly fascinating, certainly promiscuous, and certainly she never learnt to judge character. Men always brought trouble to Mary, though she captivated many besides Darnley and the Bothwell who murdered him.

Darnley's father, the Earl of Lennox, had been banished from Scotland for trying to betray the Scots to Henry VIII, who had

rewarded him by marrying him to his niece, Lady Margaret Douglas, daughter of Henry's sister Margaret, Queen of Scotland.

As soon as the news reached Elizabeth of Darnley's marriage to Mary she clapped both the Earl and Countess of Lennox¹ into the Tower. They were still there when Darnley was murdered.

At the time of his marriage Darnley was twenty. He was handsome, very tall, with many courtly accomplishments, but he was weak and pleasure-loving, and it is more than a mere possibility that Elizabeth, by offering Mary the Earl of Leicester, was subtly forcing her into the arms of young Darnley. It was a less dangerous marriage for Elizabeth to contemplate than one which would bring an alliance with a Continental Power, and Elizabeth was quite capable of planning her insults, her furies, and her whole strategy just to promote a marriage that would bring Mary to ruin.

Leicester, of course, was delightfully unwilling to leave Elizabeth's side, though they quarrelled often, and often bitterly. Elizabeth bought his good humour back with handsome gifts, of estates, a monopoly in the export of cloth, or plain, honest-to-goodness cash payments. One writer said, "He was never reconciled to her majesty under five thousand pounds, nor to a subject under five hundred pounds, and was ever and anon out with both."

But Leicester, from the public's point of view, was a man who could do no right. He was never forgiven for his upstart grandfather, a crook financier who founded the Tudor fortunes, and lost his head when he had done it. But public opinion was right when it said he was doing well for himself. He was. Fate—or Elizabeth—saved him from having to marry Mary, but, whatever his enemies might say, Leicester's job was not easy, nor were all Elizabeth's payments straight-out gains. She expected him to play a very full and important rôle at Court as organizer, adviser, and right-hand man. She expected him to welcome—and amuse—princes, ambassadors, emissaries from foreign Courts, statesmen, and noblemen, and he had to pay for all their lavish entertainments, and suitable parting gifts out of his own pocket. He had to arrange hunting expeditions, providing dozens of horses for the visitors, or masques, or pageants, and send the noble lords home with presentation geldings, gold cups, hounds, hawks, or whatever else took their fancy. Of course, he delighted in it all. He always had liked pageantry and splendour, and he relished the opportunity such a position gave him to wear magnificent costumes and to

¹ See Chapter IX.

ride fine horses. He was growing a paunch, and losing his hair, but he was still a fine figure of a man, and he knew it. He probably appreciated his appearance as much as anyone when he wore a splendid costume of "white satten embrowdered with gold a foot brood." It would set off to perfection his figure which was so "comely in all the lineaments of his body."

About this time one of the periodical serious quarrels between sovereign and favourite blew up. Elizabeth, perhaps to tease Leicester, perhaps for some deeper, darker reason, began to flirt with the witty Thomas Heneage, a Gentleman-of-the-Bedchamber. Robert retaliated by courting Lettice Knollys, Elizabeth's own cousin. Lettice, a great beauty with a striking personality and a quick way of speech, was the daughter of Sir Francis Knollys and his wife, Mary Boleyn, Anne's elder sister, who married him after the death of Sir William Carey of the "sweating sickness." Elizabeth always hated her. Lettice was already married when Leicester first began paying her serious attention—to Walter Devereux, first Earl of Essex. But it was not the fact that she was married that angered the Queen. It was Leicester's transference of affection. She became so angry that he was forced to give Lettice up, for the time being, but Elizabeth went on amusing herself with Heneage no matter how Leicester stormed and raged. But Elizabeth could never resist him for long, and in 1575 she allowed him to entertain her—at colossal expense—for nineteen whole days at Kenilworth Castle.

Lettice, the Countess of Essex, was there, perhaps lost to Elizabeth's view behind the mountains of food, the large cages of exotic birds and fruits, the Italian tumblers, the minstrels, the "gods and goddesses" strolling in the gardens, the fireworks, the trumpets, the Morris dancers, and the 320 hogsheads of beer. It cost Leicester more than £1000 a day for mere maintenance, and altogether it cost him the colossal sum of £100,000 to provide this simple entertainment for his sovereign and her Court—and to provide a sizeable army to guard her. But Elizabeth enjoyed staying with her subjects. It saved her own pocket.

William Shakespeare,¹ then a schoolboy, was probably a spectator as well as Lettice, and the pageants and plays he saw would be well acted and well produced, for Leicester was a talented theatrical organizer. He possessed more than a streak of the theatrical himself, and his delight in plays and players was both genuine and practical. He formed the first of the private companies

¹ See Chapter IV, under Neighbouring Pleasures.

which later did so much to encourage drama and dramatists such as the young Shakespeare. Elizabethan actors were still classed as "rogues and vagabonds," but Leicester, at the request of some of his retainers, took out a licence for them to perform plays. Heading the list of signatories was James Burbage, a builder of the first wooden theatre in England (it was near Finsbury Fields, in London), and the father of the famous Richard Burbage, who later created the leading rôles in almost all of Shakespeare's plays, his most famous part being that of Richard III.

Those who decry Leicester as being utterly worthless—as a man "without courage, without talent, and without virtue"—do him less than justice. A man must be judged according to his period. They were not moral times; nor did he live at a moral Court. He was an outstandingly able man in many ways, and, if nothing else, his good work to improve English bloodstock and to encourage the English theatre should always be written up to his credit. Besides, he had a weather-cock Queen ready and more than willing to indulge his almost every whim, and, after all, he was human.

But when Elizabeth refused to indulge his whim to flirt with Lettice, Robert married (or did not marry, according to which story you believe) Douglass Sheffield, widow of Baron Sheffield and sister of the Howard¹ who put the Armada to flight.

Douglass bore Leicester a son, another Robert Dudley, and she declared that she had been married to him in Esher, in Surrey, but that the marriage had been kept secret because of the Queen's certain fury. That was a reasonable enough excuse, but when Douglass was asked by the Star Chamber to produce her marriage certificate she could neither do this nor produce any other evidence of a marriage. Later she married Sir Edward Stafford, and drifted off into oblivion.

While Lettice Knollys had been joining in the revels at Kenilworth her husband, the Earl of Essex, was in Ireland, and, in spite of the Queen's presence and jealousy, Leicester managed to pay Lettice such marked attention during the festivities that tongues wagged harder than ever. They wagged even more when Essex died the following year in Dublin Castle. Dysentery was the official cause, but to the general public there could be only one reason—poison. The inquest stated otherwise, but no one wished to believe any good of Leicester, and it was rather unfortunate that the inquiry was conducted by his brother-in-law, Sir Henry

¹ See Chapter III, under Arundel.

Sidney. Leicester weathered that storm, as he had weathered the storm of Amy's death, and his "marriage" to Douglass Sheffield. Two years later, very secretly, he married the Lettice he had been pursuing so long. When Elizabeth heard of the marriage she was so angry she had to be dissuaded from her intention to send Leicester to the Tower. Eventually, of course, she forgave him—but she never forgave her cousin, Lettice.

It was a strange trick of fate to make this beautiful woman whom Elizabeth hated so intensely the wife of one of her lovers, the mother of the other. For Lettice Knollys (as she is always called) was the mother of Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, for whom later on, Elizabeth entertained so desperate an affection.

Young Essex was a quiet boy of sixteen when Leicester re-introduced him to Court, rather against the boy's will. The Queen was then about fifty, but she was at once taken with his charm, his unspoilt manner and manners, and she smiled at him in welcome, as she had done long ago, when he was only ten and making his first appearance at Court. He had earned smiles from the courtiers that day too, for refusing to allow Elizabeth to kiss him—and some teasing for forgetting to remove his hat.

Essex had two older sisters, Penelope and Dorothy (who married Henry Percy¹ ninth Earl of Northumberland), and a younger brother, Walter. He also had a remarkable step-cousin (Leicester's nephew), Sir Philip Sidney,² the son of the Mary Sidney of Penshurst who had nursed Elizabeth through her attack of smallpox.

Penelope's father had wanted her to marry Philip Sidney, but he had not been much interested in a child of thirteen, as she was then. But fate still interlocked the lives of the Devereux and the Sidneys. Philip had married Frances Walsingham, daughter of Elizabeth's "master spy," Sir Francis Walsingham. Penelope had become secretly betrothed to Charles Blount, but she had been obliged by her family to marry Lord Rich, whom she disliked—but by now Philip Sidney was deeply in love with her. She had grown into a beautiful young woman.

The young Earl of Essex, still only in his teens, joined the army sent to the Low Countries to help the Protestants, and he went off with his step-father Leicester, Sir Philip Sidney, and his other brother-in-law, Sir Thomas Perrot, son of the boisterous Sir John Perrot, Lord Deputy of Ireland, popularly supposed to be Henry VIII's son.

¹ See Chapters IV and IX.

² See Chapter V.

Leicester's reception in the Netherlands went to his head. Bonfires and fireworks illuminated a triumphal progress, and when he allowed himself to accept the Governor-Generalship without consulting Elizabeth the fat really was in the fire. After furious and acrimonious correspondence Elizabeth would neither support nor recall him, and Leicester and his army were left to flounder. His men were largely riff-raff out for plunder. Their pay was shocking. The archers earned only 8*d.* a day, and out of that they had to feed and clothe themselves. Constant brawls, quarrels, and Leicester's dwindling prestige did nothing to help matters. The Battle of Zutphen was the final blow so far as he was concerned, for the loss of his nephew, Sir Philip Sidney, almost broke his heart.

It was a dull morning with a thick autumn mist, the day Leicester and his nephew, his stepson, and their men rode out to the relief of Zutphen. The charge of the Spanish cavalry was broken by the English, but Sidney was hit by a musket-shot which shattered his thigh. He insisted on riding back to headquarters, in great pain, and thirsty with loss of blood. But as he was being given a sip of water he saw a dying soldier. "Thy need is greater than mine!" he cried. He died two months later, aged thirty-two, at Arnheim, nursed to the end by his wife.

Sidney was one of those strange men who illuminate their whole world, who become both an ideal and a legend in their own lifetime, who influence for ever every one with whom they come in contact. He was not only a brilliant scholar from childhood—he was a brilliant personality. He was "the brightest jewel in Elizabeth's crown"; "the rare ornament of his age."

His death at Zutphen brought home to Leicester the futility of the war as he was able to wage it against the Spaniards, and he returned home, uncertain of his welcome. But Elizabeth welcomed him like a conquering hero. A new crisis was worrying her—the problem of Mary Queen of Scots' execution—and she needed his advice.

Elizabeth wasted no love on Mary. In fact, they hated each other as only two ambitious women can, but Elizabeth could not help wondering if the execution of a queen who was a queen in her own right were wise. It might create an unfortunate precedent.

As soon as young Essex had gone off to the wars Elizabeth had moved Mary from TUTBURY CASTLE, in Staffordshire, where she had been imprisoned for some time, to his manor, CHARTLEY HALL, in the same county. Essex was so annoyed that he had some

of his furniture removed, but such "delaying tactics" did not baulk Elizabeth for long, and Mary was sent to live there under the gaolership of a bigoted young Protestant, Sir Amias Paulet. And it was there that Sir Francis Walsingham (Sir Philip Sidney's father-in-law, and later Essex's father-in-law) set the trap for Mary which ended in her execution at FOTHERINGAY.^{1*}

Walsingham was a frail, swarthy, bearded little man, seldom seen without a tight-fitting skull-cap which made him look the very epitome of a "master spy." He had been in Paris at the time of the "night of the long knives," the massacre of St Bartholomew, and he had returned to England with an overwhelming hatred of Roman Catholicism. That was the basis of his hatred of Mary Queen of Scots, but long before he plotted her downfall he had built up a remarkable system of secret police, foreign spies, informers, perjurers, and plotters, and he had an extremely efficient collection of first-class rogues and honest men waiting to do any job he demanded. Now he set a trap for Mary, and then sat back like a dark spider, keeping his fingers on all the threads, and receiving news constantly from a brewer of ale who acted as messenger to Chartley Hall, from Thomas Philips, the celebrated decoder of ciphers, and from Arthur Gregory, the celebrated counterfeiter of seals. Against such a team as these and their confederates the incautious Mary had no chance.

Walsingham's plot revolved round Anthony Babington, who was plotting to murder Elizabeth and put Mary on the throne. Walsingham knew all about the Babington plot, but he wanted to implicate Mary beyond all shadow of doubt, beyond all chance of acquittal by any court. So he "allowed" Babington's letters to be sent to Mary, hidden in a watertight casket inside a cask of ale. Mary's replies to Babington were smuggled out the same way, but before they were delivered to Babington they were decoded by Philips, read by Walsingham, and resealed by Gregory. There is also the possibility that some of the letters accredited to Babington were, in fact, written by Walsingham—just to speed up matters.

When Mary had been thoroughly implicated she was removed to Fotheringay for her trial, and her eventual execution.

Mary faced her destiny with quiet dignity. When she was told—at Fotheringay—of her sentence of death she crossed herself, comforted her attendants, and calmly bade them hasten with supper, as she had much to do. She spent the night at her devotions, and went with calm courage to her death early next morning.

¹ See Chapter III.

As her head was struck from her body by the Tower executioner Mary's devoted little dog ran whimpering to her, and hid himself among her clothes. He was taken away, but ran back again, and had to be carried off by force.

Mary was buried first in Peterborough Cathedral, near the body of another unhappy Queen, Catherine of Aragon, who had once owned Fotheringhay herself. Twenty-five years later Mary's son, James I, reburied her in Westminster Abbey.

Mary had been a handsome young woman, warm-hearted, with a fascination that could melt any man's heart—except Burghley's and Sir Francis Walsingham's. But by the time of her death she had lost most of her looks, lost the use of those hands which had done such exquisite embroidery, and her whole body was suffering from the long imprisonment she had endured in wretched, half-ruinous castles and in close confinement in various manors, often with unsympathetic "gaolers."¹

For some thirteen years Mary was imprisoned at CHATSWORTH,* in Derbyshire, under the guardianship of the Earl of Shrewsbury and his redoubtable, remarkable, and all but indestructible wife, "Bess of Hardwick." Bess has been described by various biographers as proud, treacherous, unfeeling, masculine, forbidding, selfish, beautiful, and discreet. She achieved four husbands, numerous children, five mansions, and immense wealth. Much of this she inveigled from her husbands, and a good deal she earned as a farmer, money-lender, a lead and timber merchant, and as a general meddler in all manner of affairs. She lived to a ripe old age, and died, with no illusions and without a friend, in 1608.

Bess of Hardwick, daughter of John Hardwick, of Derbyshire, was first married as a girl of fourteen to an almost equally young groom, Robert Barlow. He died soon afterwards. Some years later she became the third wife of Sir William Cavendish, former Gentleman Usher to Cardinal Wolsey, being married "at 2 of the clock after midnight." Her many qualities and failings won his deep affection, and at her suggestion he sold his property in the south to purchase the Chatsworth estate from her relatives in Derbyshire. He began building the fine manor which she completed after his death. By Sir William Cavendish, Bess had three sons and three daughters who reached maturity, and two of the sons later founded Dukedoms—those of Devonshire and Newcastle.

Bess's next husband was Sir William St Loe (or Lowe), of

¹ See Chapter VII, under Chillington Park.

Gloucestershire, Captain of the Guard to Queen Elizabeth. He called his wife "his own sweet Bess," and she twisted him round her little finger. St Loe owned "divers fair lordships in Gloucestershire," and Bess saw to it that all the property was settled on her and her heirs before she married him. His family complained, with some justice, of her undue influence over him, but she continued to keep a firm hand on the reins, and when St Loe was not at Court he was under her thumb at Chatsworth.

Bess demanded more from her fourth husband-elect, George Talbot, sixth Earl of Shrewsbury. Before she would consent to marriage herself she insisted that her youngest daughter, Mary Cavendish, should marry Gilbert Talbot (then only fourteen), and that her eldest son, Henry Cavendish, should marry the youngest Talbot girl, Grace.

In an unguarded moment, and in the first flush of enthusiasm, Shrewsbury said of Bess that "of all the earthly joys that had happened to him, he thanked Providence chiefest for her." He changed his tune later, however, declaring that he was ashamed of himself for marrying "a creature with so divelish a disposition."

Shrewsbury was a gentle and kindly man, and "half a Catholic," and Elizabeth at once chose him as gaoler for Mary when she fled to England in 1568. The fact that he was "half a Catholic" made the choice almost a compliment to Mary, but, in spite of Shrewsbury's kindness, the Scots' Queen endured much unhappiness through the constant torments offered her by Bess.

It is pleasant to record that Bess herself had a taste of imprisonment later on—in the Tower of London.¹

Some five or six years after Mary had fled to England Bess acted as hostess to Margaret, Countess of Lennox, once Mary's mother-in-law. The Countess had been in the Tower herself for allowing her son, Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, to marry Mary. Now Darnley was dead, Mary a captive, and the Countess on her way to Scotland with her second son Charles. For the match-making Bess this was too good an opportunity to miss, and the Countess was not allowed to escape before she had consented to marry Charles to Bess's daughter Elizabeth. The wedding took place the following month—to Queen Elizabeth's fury, for any child born to Charles Stuart would have some claim to the English throne.

In fact, Charles and Elizabeth's daughter Arabella Stuart²

¹ See Chapter IX.

² Ibid.

became a thorn in every one's flesh—in Queen Elizabeth's, in James I's, and even in Bess of Hardwick's.

But long before the lively, unfortunate Arabella was born Bess was sent to the Tower to cool her ambitions, and the Countess of Lennox was sent back for another dose.

Shrewsbury, anxiously excusing himself of all complicity regarding Charles Stuart and Elizabeth, gives some idea of how marriages in those days were "arranged." He wrote: "There are few noblemens sons in England that she hath not praid me to dele forre at one tyme or other; so I did for my lord Rutland, with my lord Essex, for my lord Wharton, and sundry others; and now this comes unlooked for without thanks to me."

When Bess was not marrying herself, marrying her children, bullying her husbands, or tormenting her captive she was building mansions. She finished Chatsworth after Sir William Cavendish's death, and built four other mansions—WORKSOP, BOLSOVER,* HARDWICK,* and OLDCOTES. For Hardwick, which Bess built to entertain Queen Elizabeth, Mary Queen of Scots embroidered bed-hangings, many of them being "wroughte with her nydill."

Bess's building fever never diminished. Some said it was owing to a prophecy that she would not die as long as work was going ahead on one of her mansions.

Before Shrewsbury died he and Bess had separated after countless bitter quarrels. Bess, with characteristic determination to worst her enemies, wrote to Elizabeth accusing him of improper relations with Queen Mary. Elizabeth's letter was perhaps intercepted by Walsingham, but the accusation made Mary so furious that she and Bess became even worse enemies. When Shrewsbury was finally relieved of his irksome and unpleasant job as gaoler he thanked Elizabeth for ridding him of "the two devils." Bess stayed on at Chatsworth. Shrewsbury retired to his manor of Hansworth, in Sheffield Park, living in a "doating condition" for one of his servants. On his death Bess began building a new Hardwick Hall close to the "old" manor, which remained standing. The prophecy which accounted for her building fever was eventually fulfilled. She died during a hard frost, when her builders were unable to work on her new manor of Oldcotes.

That is the background to some thirteen years of Mary's imprisonment before being sent to Chartley and Fotheringay, and it was the kindly Shrewsbury whom Elizabeth sent to superintend the execution. Mary had been imprisoned in several other places,

including Bolton Castle, in Yorkshire, the only one of her prisons still standing; Tutbury Castle, near Derby, which was later demolished by Parliamentary troops during the Civil War; and Wingfield, also in Derbyshire. She also stayed (under guard) at many places while journeying from one prison to another. One of these was LYME PARK,* in Cheshire.

Lyme Park, on the borders of Cheshire, Derbyshire, and Lancashire, was given to Sir Thomas Danvers as a reward for rescuing the Black Prince's Standard at Caen, and for capturing the Constable of France at Crécy in 1346. His daughter married Sir Piers Legh, and the Leghs held the property for six hundred years before one of the family, Lord Newton, presented it to the National Trust in 1947.

The house and park are both haunted, but not by Mary Queen of Scots. Nor is she thought to be responsible for the distant pealing of bells often heard at night. The long gallery in the Hall is known both as Mary Queen of Scots' Room and as the Ghost Room, and there a Lady in White has been seen. She is thought to be Blanche, who died of grief when her lover, another Sir Piers Legh, was brought back dead from Agincourt in 1415. Sometimes his ghostly funeral procession is seen winding through Lyme Park, followed by the faithful, grieving Blanche.

There is also an Unknown who might be expected to haunt Lyme Hall, but like Mary, he has gone without a ghostly trace. Many years ago, when a small secret chamber was discovered under the Ghost Room, the skeleton of a forgotten priest or fugitive was found there. Who he was nobody knows.

Mary Queen of Scots was executed in February 1587—the same month that saw the funeral procession to St Paul's of young Sir Philip Sidney—one of the three great men from whom young Essex learnt so much. From Sidney, who loved his sister, and whose widow he afterwards married, he learnt something of the satisfaction of service, something of the power of an ideal. From his step-father, Leicester, Essex learnt the power that grows with a queen's favouritism. And from the spontaneous welcome that Leicester had received in the Netherlands Essex learnt something of the dangerous intoxication of military prestige. From Sidney's, and his own, father-in-law, Sir Francis Walsingham, he learnt the power of knowledge—not of book-learning, but the personal, often discreditable scraps of information brought in by paid spies lurking in courts, in taverns, in armies, wherever men and women

met together, and particularly where they met in unguarded moments. Essex began to build his own network of spies, thus paving the way for the rôle he was determined to play, that of Queen's adviser.

Essex had matured during his service abroad, and now, at nineteen, the fifty-three-year-old Queen found him even more charming, and completely irresistible. He became her constant companion, and began to indulge those violent passions that so studded their intimacy. He was becoming spoilt, and revelling in his first taste of power. He was violently jealous of Sir Walter Raleigh¹—and became his mortal enemy. He quarrelled so bitterly with Sir Charles Blount, another of Elizabeth's favourites (and the lover of his sister Penelope), that a duel was the only answer.

The quarrel flared up during a tournament in Elizabeth's "hunting park"—now Regent's Park. Sir Charles, who was a handsome young man, so distinguished himself at the tournament that Elizabeth sent him a richly enamelled gold chessman. Sir Charles triumphantly tied it to his arm with a scarlet ribbon, and the furious Essex, beside himself with jealousy, cried, "Now I see every fool must have a favour!"

The two young courtiers fought their duel in Marylebone Park. Essex was wounded in the thigh, and disarmed. Elizabeth, when told of the escapade, laughed shortly and exclaimed, "By God's Death, it is fit that some one or other should take him down and teach him better manners, otherwise there would be no rule with him."

Human nature being what it is, Essex and Sir Charles became the best of friends. The Queen, for all her criticism, gazed on Essex more and more fondly. His star was rising rapidly. His step-father's was waning for the last time.

Leicester's and Lettice's only child, "the noble impe," a little hunchback child, had died when only three or four, and Leicester had immediately claimed his other son, the Robert Dudley born to him by Douglass Sheffield. He was a clever boy who later set Society by the ears by deserting his wife and string of daughters and eloping to Italy with his beautiful cousin.

At the moment Leicester had more worries on his mind than the death of his legitimate son and the education of his other one. No sooner had he recovered from the Low Country débacle and played his part in urging the execution of Mary than preparations

¹ See Chapter VII, under Sherborne, and Chapter IX.

to repel the Armada began in real earnest. Elizabeth appointed him "Lieutenant-General of the Queen's Armies and Companies," and there was much to do. To complicate matters, he was not well, but there was no time for any relaxing. A system of beacons was arranged along the coast, to be fired as a warning should the Spaniards land. Forts were built up and strengthened, a 'scorched earth' policy prepared, and companies of "petronels" (armed horsemen) organized. Their duty was to drive the cattle inland at the first sign of invasion, and to fire the land as they went.

Leicester himself commanded an army guarding the mouth of the Thames and the approaches to London. Yet another army stood guard over the Queen, and was ready for instant action against any Roman Catholic rising. Leicester worked night and day, inspecting the defences, supervising all branches of the commissariat, and looking to the welfare of both men and horses. He urged Elizabeth to withdraw from London, but the staunch Queen declined. And when she went to Tilbury to address her troops in her immortal words of defiance it was Leicester who greeted her, and guarded her with 1000 horse and 2000 infantry.

With Leicester and young Essex holding the bridle-rein as she sat on her white palfrey, with a marshal's truncheon in her hands, Elizabeth cried, "I know I have but the body of a feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a King, and a King of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma, or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm."

While Elizabeth's words were still ringing in England's ears the Armada was defeated, and Leicester was free, at last, to set out for Kenilworth for the holiday he had long been promising himself.

But Leicester never reached Kenilworth.

On his way north he spent a day hunting in Wychwood Forest—and the ghost of his dead wife, Amy Robsart, came to him there, warning him he would be with her in ten days. He returned to CORNBURY PARK, north-west of Oxford, where he had been staying, and died suddenly a few days later, almost exactly twenty-eight years after Amy's mysterious death on the staircase. Amy's ghost was seen many times, at nightfall, in Wychwood Forest. Her appearance always foretold the sudden death of the beholder.

Those who did not believe the story of Amy's warning appearance and his supposed death from "the continual fever" naturally maintained that he had been poisoned. The sudden death of any prominent or superfluous man or woman was always greeted with

the same cry. Amy had been poisoned; Lettice's first husband had been poisoned; even the little hunchback boy had been poisoned (by his nurse, this time)—and now Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, had himself been poisoned.

To make the story more plausible gossip said that Leicester had discovered an illicit attachment between Lettice and his handsome young Gentleman of the Horse, Christopher Blount, younger brother of Charles. Leicester was intending to poison both Lettice and Blount, but Blount, suspecting his intentions, had struck first.

Lettice did marry Christopher Blount, who was about the same age as her son Essex, but Leicester was always deeply attached to Lettice, and the post-mortem revealed no hint of poison. To Elizabeth he left a jewel of three great emeralds and a rope of six hundred pearls on which to hang it. His title passed to his nephew Robert Sidney, Philip's younger brother. It shortly afterwards became extinct.

The illegitimate Robert Dudley, who could not, of course, inherit his father's title, did remarkably well. He was knighted for valour in Essex's expedition to Cadiz, and when his young wife died married Alicia Leigh, of Warwickshire. She presented him with a big family of daughters. He was further disappointed through losing his Star Chamber suit to prove his birthright—and scandalized his world by eloping with his lovely young cousin, Elizabeth Southwell, disguised as his page. Robert Dudley turned Roman Catholic, received Papal dispensation, and married Elizabeth, who bore him thirteen children. They lived in Florence, where Robert won fame as a mathematician and shipbuilder, and as the engineer who drained the marshes between Pisa and the sea. This remarkable achievement founded the future prosperity of Leghorn. The grateful Pope created him a Papal Count, and the Emperor Ferdinand II created him Duke of Northumberland and Earl of Warwick in the Holy Roman Empire. This Robert Dudley died in 1649, at the age of seventy-six—the remarkable son of a remarkable father.

Two years after Leicester's death Essex married the widow of his friend Sir Philip Sidney—Frances Walsingham. They kept the marriage a secret from the Queen, and she was not told till Frances was obviously pregnant. Her anger flared up just as it had over Raleigh's marriage, over Leicester's marriage with Lettice, and (for a different reason) over the marriages of Lady Jane

Grey's¹ sisters. Her anger with Essex was short-lived. He was soon in high favour again.

But Essex never had the stability of his step-father. He had not spent his young manhood in a chastening atmosphere of family disgrace and poverty, as Leicester had. He had not had to work, and work hard, dependent on another man, as Leicester had had to do on his father-in-law's property in Norfolk. He had not grown up and lived in a chill wind of unpopularity, for Robert Dudley was never forgiven for the sins of his grandfather or for the arrogance of his father. Essex had no shining skills in horsemanship, in stage management of all kinds, in military leadership. He had a charm which became a spoilt charm under Elizabeth's hot-house influence, and a hot-headedness which misread the warning signs and brought him to disaster. For the tragedy of Essex was largely the tragedy of his own personality.

Elizabeth loved Essex with an unfathomable passion, but with a see-saw quality that never entered into her love for Leicester, for all their quarrels. Perhaps the difference in her age and Essex's was part of the answer to this strange riddle of adoration. When Essex was with the Queen he renewed her youth. She loved his facile turn of speech, his possessive passions, the fascination of his extrovert nature. But when he was away from her his fascination departed with him, and she saw only too clearly his many weaknesses, and she became angry with herself as well as with him. Essex too sensed something of the vital importance of personal contact with the Queen.

After his failure to quell the rebellion in Ireland, Essex believed or persuaded himself to believe, that all would be well if he could but see the Queen and explain everything to her in the old privacy of their love. He disobeyed her instructions, and with a party of close friends sailed secretly for England. Four days later he rode into Nonsuch Palace, Henry VIII's magnificent palace near Croydon. (It was later given to Barbara Castlemaine by Charles II. She pulled it down and turned the estate into small farms to bring in rent.) He strode straight through the Presence Chamber and right into the Queen's bedchamber. The old magic worked. Although the Queen was but recently out of bed, and still without her very necessary make-up, she was delighted to welcome the young man. After a stay of a few minutes Essex withdrew to change into more suitable clothes. On their second meeting the Queen again welcomed him. But by the time Essex presented

¹ See Chapter III.

himself for the third time some of the magic had ebbed away. Elizabeth had remembered his disobedience and his folly, and his military incompetence. She dismissed him with a curt command to keep to his chamber. He was sent from Court in disgrace and committed to York House, where he became so ill with dysentery that the Queen softened towards him. She sent him doctors and broths, but, as his strength returned, so did her anger. His great popularity angered her too. To all the disaffected throughout the country, and there were many, Essex seemed the logical rallying-point. His spies brought him stories of Puritans crying out against the corruption of the Protestants, of Roman Catholics protesting against the unfair fines levied against them, of half the country complaining of monopolies granted to favourites, and of the grumbling at forced loans. But Essex (now at liberty again) misread the signs. His vanity led him to believe that the time was ripe to overthrow Elizabeth—and that he was the man to do it. He believed that the City of London would fight for him. In reality the City was prepared to cheer for him—but nothing more. But, having misread the signs, Essex went ahead with plans for a rising. He summoned his friends to Essex House, in the Strand, amid excitement and activity that could not fail to rouse the suspicious interest of the authorities.

The rising fizzled out like a soused bonfire.

The only real spark that was lit was a spark of chivalry. During the siege of Essex House the besiegers, headed by the Lord Admiral, offered to allow Lady Essex and her sister-in-law, Lady Rich, and other women to depart unharmed. Essex replied that the house was so well fortified that it would take an hour to let the women out, and another hour to barricade it up again. The Lord Admiral agreed to a two-hour truce, and the women departed. The men were forced to surrender shortly afterwards, Francis Tresham¹ (of the Gunpowder Plot) being among them.

Essex was sent to the Tower, and later sent for trial on the charge of treason. One of his prosecutors was the Attorney-General, Sir Edward Coke, of STOKE POGES,² who headed a ferocious attack against the Earl. His conviction was a foregone conclusion. But the question of whether Elizabeth would sign his death-warrant was another matter. Love, pride, hatred, and fear all played their part. Perhaps Raleigh put his finger on the real solution when he said, "The late Earl of Essex told Queen Elizabeth that her conditions were as crooked as her carcass; but it cost

¹ See Chapter IV.

² See Chapter I.

him his head, which his insurrection had not cost him, but for that speech."

The story of Essex and the ring is, perhaps only a legend, but it is a legend that has clung through the years, and a legend that was strong enough to implant the ring in Elizabeth's tomb in Westminster Abbey.

The story says that Elizabeth gave Essex the ring, telling him to send it to her if ever he were in peril. As he lay under sentence of death in the Tower Essex remembered the ring, and he sent it by a messenger to Lady Scrope, charging her to give it to the Queen. By mistake the messenger gave it to Lady Scrope's sister, the Countess of Nottingham. She took it to her husband, an old enemy of Essex, and they decided to keep the ring and say nothing to the Queen. Elizabeth, distracted at the thought of the death of her favourite, postponed his execution, perhaps waiting for the summons of the ring. Essex, hoping against hope, at last resigned himself to the thought that the Queen was adamant. The warrant was signed, and Essex was beheaded.

Some years later the Countess of Nottingham,¹ on her death-bed, confessed to the Queen what she had done, begging her forgiveness. But the aged Queen, shaking the Countess in a paroxysm of fury, shouted to the dying woman, "God may forgive you, but I never can!"

With Essex dead—at thirty-three—his relations' complicated family life went on. His mother, Lettice, was married to Christopher Blount, who was young enough to be her son. Her brother-in-law, Charles Blount, was her daughter's lover. Penelope had by this time run away from the Lord Rich she had been forced to marry, and was openly living with Charles. Lord Rich eventually divorced her, and she and Charles were married, but all of them died long before Essex's mother, the beautiful Lettice Knollys. She was lively right up to the time of her death, at the age of ninety-four.

Essex's wife, Frances Walsingham, married for a third time, becoming the Countess of Clanricard. She does not seem to have had any particular talents or beauty; in fact, one biographer describes her as placid, faithful, and a little simple. For all that, she managed to marry two of the most remarkable of the Elizabethans. True it is that her first husband, Philip Sidney, loved Penelope Devereaux rather than her, and that her second husband, the Earl

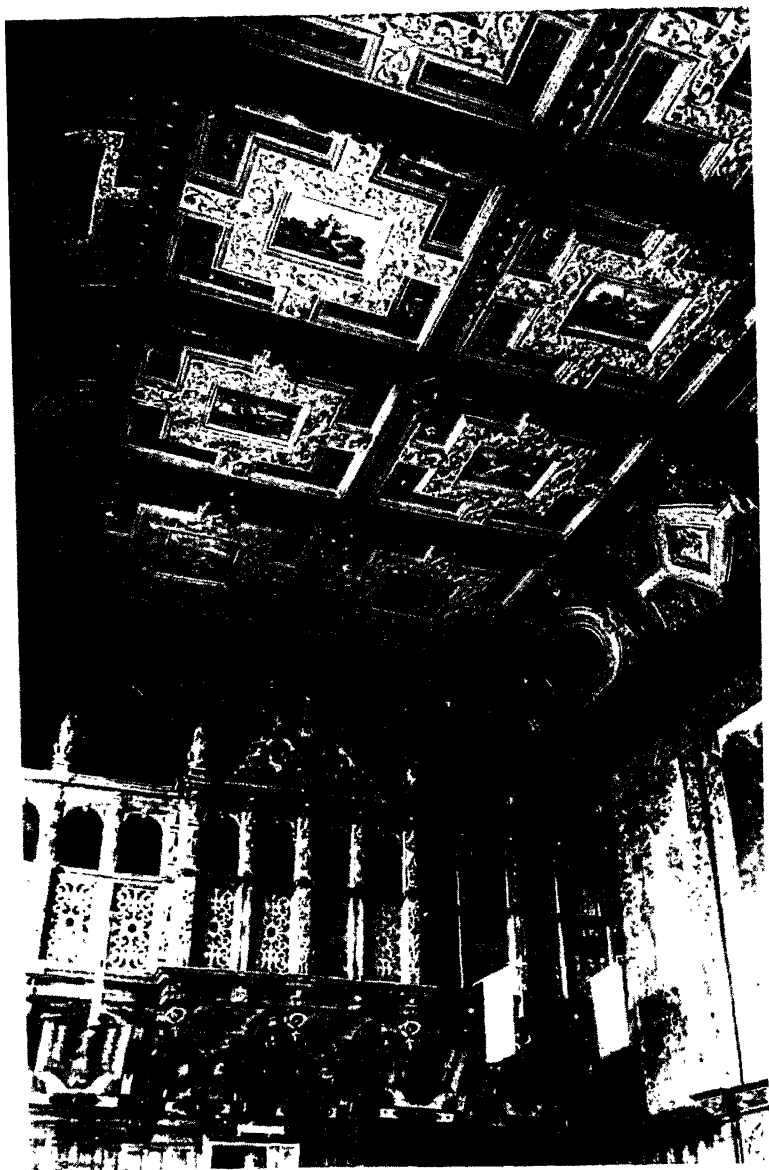
¹ See Chapter III, under Arundel.



LONGLEAT

Photo British Travel Association

[p. 50]



HATFIELD HOUSE: CEILING OF THE GREAT HALL

Photo British Travel Association

of Essex, was not noticeably faithful to her. But she saw enough of Essex to bear him five children. The eldest son, another Robert, the third Earl of Essex, was one of the principals in the shocking case of the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury¹—and the victim of the monstrous behaviour of his evil and abominable wife.

SINCE THEN

ALLINGTON CASTLE* stands on a site that has been inhabited since the Stone Age, and the castle bought by Henry Wyatt in 1492 incorporated some of the rooms of an unfortified manor house built in the twelfth century. The castle was almost in ruins when Sir Henry bought it, and he not only restored it, but added much beautiful work, including the Long Gallery, one of the earliest in England. He replaced the early English windows and fireplaces with handsome Tudor ones, and, indeed, created a castle worthy of the great social glory it enjoyed. Henry VII, Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn, Katherine Parr, and Cardinal Wolsey were among the guests entertained at the castle by Sir Henry and his son Sir Thomas, who is said to have written the first sonnet in the English language.

After the death of Sir Thomas the poet, his son Sir Thomas inherited the castle, but he forfeited it to the Crown when he lost his head following the failure of the Wyatt rebellion.

Fire and neglect brought the old castle to ruin, but in 1905 the late Lord and Lady Conway² bought the ruins and restored them to charm and beauty. In 1951 the castle was purchased by the Carmelite Order on behalf of the Prior of Aylesford and his brethren.

The castle is open to the public on afternoons between May and September.

ASHRIDGE, near Little Gaddesden, Hertfordshire, was one of Queen Elizabeth's estates during her girlhood. After she was arrested and sent to the Tower following Wyatt's rebellion she very naturally took a great dislike to Ashridge, where she had staged an abortive illness to postpone her inevitable command journey to London. She passed the manor to Sir Thomas Egerton, afterwards Lord Chancellor to James I, whose secretary at one time was the poet John Donne.

The Ashridge Estate now belongs to the National Trust, and embodies some woods, copses, and meadows with the delightful names of Clipper Down, Moneybury Hill, Sallow Copse, Thunderell Drive, and

¹ See Chapter VI.

² See Chapter VI, under Saltwood Castle.

the old Dairy Meadow. The last owner of the old manor Elizabeth knew was the eccentric Francis Egerton, third and last Duke of Bridgewater, known as the "father of inland navigation." Francis was an inveterate smoker and taker of snuff, but was more renowned for his hatred of women. Having been disappointed in love (by the beautiful Duchess of Hamilton), he would have nothing to do with any woman. All his servants were menservants. He also liked to cut off the heads of all flowers—but he was a very able man for all his eccentricities. He spent a fortune cutting a canal forty-two miles long connecting his coal-mines at Worsley with Manchester—a project said to have inspired the building of the Manchester Ship Canal. But, though he paid out a fortune to build the canal, he earned a far larger one—something like £80,000 a year. (Which perhaps shows what concentration without women can do.)

Francis Egerton let the old manor go to ruin and built a new one which is now the Bonar Law College of Citizenship. This and the Toll Roads and part of the park do not belong to the National Trust, but the estate is a beautiful one, rich in trees, which are a particularly wonderful sight in the autumn.

PENSHURST.* The earliest part of this famous house was built in the fourteenth century by Sir John de Poultenay, wool-merchant and Lord Mayor of London. The chief feature is the magnificent timber-roofed Great Hall, but many alterations and additions have been made since Sir John's day.

The Sidney family (still the owners) were given Penshurst by Edward VI, who gave it to Sir William Sidney, "his well-beloved knight, in reward of services done to him in his father's lifetime." The Sidneys were always very close to the Tudors. Sir William had been young Edward's chamberlain and tutor, and Lady Sidney his governess. Their son Henry was the boy's closest friend and constant companion, and it was in Henry's arms that the young king died at Greenwich.

Sir Henry Sidney married Mary Dudley, sister of the Guildford Dudley who married Lady Jane Grey, and sister of Robert Dudley, who became Elizabeth's favourite and the Earl of Leicester. Sir Henry and Mary lived quietly at Penshurst, and Mary was able to avoid being involved in her father's scheme to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne.

It was about this time that their son, afterwards Sir Philip Sidney, was born, at Penshurst. He was called after Queen Mary's consort, Prince Philip of Spain—an eminently tactful tribute from a family so closely connected with the Dudleys' high treason.

Philip's younger brother, Robert, who inherited Leicester's title,

and his father both enlarged the house, and it was restored with sympathetic understanding by Sir John Shelley Sidney and his son, the first Lord De L'Isle and Dudley, in the nineteenth century.

The present owner is Lord De L'Isle and Dudley, V.C., who has opened Penshurst to the public several days a week from April till mid-October. There are also special days set aside for connoisseurs, for Penshurst contains a remarkable collection of paintings, furniture, and historical relics.

HATFIELD HOUSE* is one of the most romantic and notable Jacobean houses in England. It stands at the end of a long avenue, down which the boy King Edward VI was taken to the Tower to prepare for his Coronation; up which Elizabeth was taken as a prisoner, down which she was taken as a queen; and along which the Cecils once rode in their coach with six white horses.

The site of Hatfield House had long had historical associations. The Bishop of Ely once owned a palace there, but was forced to give it to Henry VIII, who did at least give him property in Cambridge and Norfolk in exchange. At one time Henry's sister Mary, the youthful ex-Queen of France and wife of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, lived there, and their daughter Frances, the mother of Lady Jane Grey, was born at Hatfield House.

The precocious little Prince Edward studied French there. His half-sister Elizabeth stayed there in semi but not too arduous imprisonment, and it was at Hatfield House that she held her first Privy Council meeting.

James I exchanged this ancient royal home with Sir Robert Cecil (later the Earl of Salisbury) for the palace of Theobalds, which Cecil handed over with a magnificent entertainment for which Ben Jonson had written a masque. Cecil built Hatfield House as it stands to-day, laid out two parks, for red deer and fallow deer, and planted a vineyard.

Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, was the hunchback son of Elizabeth's great Minister, Lord Burghley, and the nephew of Lady Hoby, of Bisham Abbey.¹ He was an ugly little man, called "the elf" by Elizabeth, and by James "my little beagle." Salisbury never lived at Hatfield House. He died in May 1612, and the house was not finished till after his death.

The house contains many fine sixteenth- and seventeenth-century portraits, and a number of treasures, including the Casket Letters of Mary Queen of Scots, and Lord Burghley's diary, which gives the story of the defeat of the Armada as seen through official eyes in Whitehall.

¹ See Chapter I.

Hatfield House is owned by the Marquis of Salisbury. It is open to the public most days in the week between mid-March and the end of September.

KENILWORTH* saw royal splendour—and tragedy—long before Leicester staged his nineteen days of splendour for Queen Elizabeth at so fantastic a cost.

Edward II was imprisoned there for a time by his Queen Isabella, "the she-wolf of France," and her favourites. There he was "persuaded" to abdicate by a deputation of Bishops, who declared that he could continue to live honourably if he surrendered his throne to his young son. Otherwise he would be liquidated. Dressed in rich sable, Edward wept, and agreed, and fell to the floor in a swoon. But his abdication did not save his life. His evil Queen and her lover, Roger Mortimer, had him shifted from one castle to another, always closely guarded, always secretly and at night, so that no one knew for certain where he was. They ill-treated him, fed him with foul meat, clothed him inadequately, bullied and harassed him; but he was "a man of fine person, of great physical strength," and he would not oblige them by dying conveniently and without a struggle. Eventually he was sent to BERKELEY CASTLE, in Gloucestershire, in the custody of two villainous knights—Sir Thomas Gurney and Sir John Maltravers. He was thrust into a black dungeon reeking with the stench of carrion and dead beasts, and there he was foully murdered with the utmost brutality.

The castle site was formerly occupied by a nunnery, and long before Edward's murder in 1327 the property figured in a curious trial. About 1043 Earl Godwin secured the property illegally, and later, when he was charged with murder, he was forced to undergo the strange "ordeal of the corsned." The corsned was a piece of unleavened barley bread made with cheese. It was given as a test of guilt to prisoners, who received the Sacrament at the same time. If they choked and died they were guilty.

Earl Godwin choked and died.

Berkeley Castle, an eighty-room castle, has been unoccupied except for a security guard since the eighth and last Earl of Berkeley died in 1942. It has the most important privately owned collection of charters and manuscripts in Britain, and is a building of great architectural interest.

To return to KENILWORTH.

Henry II, his son John, and his grandson Henry III, all spent vast sums turning Kenilworth Castle into an impregnable fortress, which Henry III deeply regretted in his old age. It then became the stronghold

of his former favourite and later enemy, Simon de Montfort. Old Simon was finally killed in the bloody Battle of EVESHAM. He was hacked to pieces, and one of his feet, set in silver, a curious memento—was sent to the Abbey which once stood near Alnwick Castle.¹ According to Derbyshire legend, one of Simon de Montfort's followers at the Battle of Evesham was Robin Hood's friend and lieutenant, Little John. He became an outlaw after the Earl's great defeat.

Evesham itself was founded by St Egwin, a Saxon saint who founded an abbey there in the eighth century. St Egwin, who was a Bishop of Worcester, was the victim of malicious gossip and false accusations, and he set off to see the Pope, to vindicate himself. To make things as difficult as possible Egwin fastened gyves on his ankles and threw the key into the Avon.

While Egwin was in Rome one of his servants caught a salmon in the Tiber, and, when preparing it for the Bishop's dinner, found there inside it the very same key that had been thrown into the Avon!

With such a miracle on his doorstep, the Pope naturally regarded the accusations against St Egwin as completely and utterly false—as, of course, they must have been! Egwin became a saint, and returned to England to found Evesham Abbey.

Edward III's son John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, loved Kenilworth above all his other manors and castles, and they included Mary Queen of Scots' prison of Tutbury Castle. He carried out many alterations to Kenilworth, and built a magnificent Banqueting Hall, supposed to be second only in magnificence to Westminster Hall itself. Now it is only a shell.

When Leicester died in 1588 his elder brother, Ambrose, Earl of Warwick, inherited Kenilworth, but he died only a year later. His executors sold the castle, at much below value, for £14,000 to James I, who gave it to Prince Henry. The Prince visited it only occasionally for hunting, and Prince Charles (later Charles I), who owned it after Henry's death, did not care for it.

The castle was "slighted" by order of Parliament during the Civil War. The woods and parks were destroyed, the property cut up into farms, and the lake drained to make more pasturage.

Charles II resumed possession of his ruined castle, and gave it to his most faithful of retainers, Sir Edward Hyde, first Earl of Clarendon (whose daughter Anne had married his brother James). The Clarendons found they could do nothing with the damaged castle, and it has gradually fallen into the sadly beautiful ruin it is to-day.

¹ See Chapter II.

Charles also gave Clarendon the fine mansion of CORNBURY PARK, where Leicester died so suddenly after seeing Amy's ghost. The Clarendons held the mansion till Sir Edward's grandson sold it in the eighteenth century to Charles Spencer, Duke of Marlborough. The first Earl of Clarendon made great additions to Cornbury Park, which is largely a Tudor building replacing a royal hunting lodge that had existed since about 1100. In those days Cornbury Park was part of the huge Wychwood, a favourite hunting forest of the medieval kings, and even now the house is surrounded by 1500 acres, much of it still forest-land. Nearly every English king and queen up to the time of Charles I visited Cornbury, and at various times it was given or lent to different favourites. Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, certainly occupied it during the last few years of his life, though he may not have owned it.

Cornbury Park was purchased by the late Mr Vernon Watney in 1901, and it is now owned by his son.

The CHARTLEY HALL where Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned was built by the Ferrers, the Earls of Derby, but it passed to the Devereux family by marriage in 1460. This half-timbered house was destroyed by fire in 1781, and was replaced by a small house built on the same site. This too was burnt down, and again rebuilt in 1847. Old Chartley Castle, near the manor house, was built in 1220. It has long been a ruin, and now nothing remains but two ivy-covered towers with walls twelve feet thick.

Staffordshire was for centuries famous for wild cattle, which were supposed to be descendants of the original wild cattle of prehistoric Britain. Some of them were kept for centuries in Chartley Park—a strange breed of shaggy-coated animals with black ears, black muzzles, black hooves, and black-tipped horns. Unfortunately the animals were attacked by tuberculosis in 1900, and by 1905 only eight animals remained. Some of these were bought by the Duke of Bedford for breeding purposes, and were taken to Woburn.

There is little but memories left of the three castles that have stood at FOTHERINGAY.* The first was built by Simon de Senlis. He wanted to marry William the Conqueror's daughter Judith, but she refused him because he was lame—so he married her daughter, Matilda (or Maud). But the greatest was built by John of Gaunt's brother Edmund of Langley, Duke of York. He built the keep in the form of a fetterlock, which, with the addition of a falcon in the centre, was the emblem of the Yorks.

Henry VIII gave the castle to Catherine of Aragon, but she hated it so heartily that when he had wearied of her she declared that she would go there only if bound with ropes and taken by force. Mary Queen of Scots had little cause to enjoy the castle either, for there the last scenes in her tragedy were played out.

On the morning of her execution a ring dropped off Mary's finger. It was found two hundred years later, a ring with a true lovers' knot entwining the initials of Mary and Darnley. True love? Perhaps, but there is more than a vague suspicion that Mary had some part in Bothwell's murder of Darnley. Nor did she grieve too long when Bothwell—then her husband—elected to escape rather than share captivity in Scotland with her. Rumour said she consoled herself with her half-brother George Douglas, and bore him a child. But, in spite of her peccadilloes and her lack of wisdom, Mary must have been a charming, beautiful woman of great fascination.

Within a few years of Mary's death Fotheringay Castle was described as "a sickly Castle, not able to hold vp her heade."

A grass mound surrounded by ditches and the river is all there is now to speak of past glories and tragedies.

TUTBURY CASTLE, eleven miles from Derby, was one of the dank and miserable prisons Mary had to endure, and, in spite of her pleas and complaints about the damp and the stench from the open sewers near by, she was imprisoned at Tutbury four times altogether. Her last imprisonment there was in the summer before she moved to Essex's home, Chartley—and during that summer, in spite of rheumatics, she still enjoyed hawking and good food. Tutbury Castle had seen happier days during John of Gaunt's time, though the castle's reputation for gaiety grew through his neglect of his Spanish wife, Constance, the daughter of Peter the Cruel, King of Castile and Leon. John was much occupied with the war against France, and with his mistress (later his third wife), Catherine Swynford, and Constance, a vivacious woman who liked lively entertainment, made Tutbury an "open house" for minstrels, troubadours, and dancers during his many absences. John found the entertainers somewhat abusing her hospitality, and, to keep some sort of check on their numbers and activities, he founded a Guild of Musicians. They elected an annual King of the Musicians, whose job was to see that all those who claimed to be minstrels, troubadours, or dancers were, in fact, "up to professional standard," and not merely hangers-on. The King of the Musicians was elected with great ritual and ceremony, including the incredibly cruel Tutbury Bull Running, which was, however, much older than John of Gaunt's time. Robin Hood is

said to have enjoyed some of the great feasting that followed all the festivities of installation.

John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, who owned and rebuilt much of Tutbury, and who loved Kenilworth so dearly, was the elder brother of Edmund of Langley, Duke of York, the man who built the great castle of Fotheringay. They were two interesting sons of an interesting father, King Edward III, who had seven sons and five daughters. The eldest son was the Black Prince, who died of dropsy before his father, but though his son Richard II succeeded to the throne, it was John of Gaunt and Edmund who ultimately influenced the line of succession.

John was called "of Gaunt" (from Ghent) and Edmund "of Langley"—King's Langley, in Hertfordshire—from their birth-places, but their Dukedoms of Lancaster and York gave the names to the rival factions which fought for supremacy in the Wars of the Roses.

John married three times, and, like his father, had a large number of children.

His first wife was Blanche, daughter and heiress of Henry, Duke of Lancaster. From John's marriage to Blanche descended Kings of Portugal and England, and the wife of the King of Sweden and Denmark.

His second wife was Constance, elder daughter and heiress of Peter the Cruel, King of Castile and Leon. From this marriage to Constance descended Kings of Spain.

His third wife was his former mistress, Catherine Swynford. Their illegitimate children, surname Beaufort, were afterwards legitimized, and from various of the Beauforts descended Edward IV, Richard III, Warwick the King-maker, Henry VII, Henry VIII, and his sister Margaret. She married James IV of Scotland, and became the grandmother of Mary Queen of Scots. Her son was James VI of Scotland and James I of England, and his descendants have reigned in Great Britain ever since.

Edmund, Duke of York, married another daughter of Peter the Cruel, Isabella. Some generations later one of his descendants inter-married with John of Gaunt's descendants.

The present CHATSWORTH contains little of the house where Mary Queen of Scots was confined, except for a staircase in the north-east corner. A bedroom in the house is still called "Mary Queen of Scots' Bedroom," but it is probably not true that the bedroom is a survival of the old house. The story says that it was propped up by scaffolding

when the old house was pulled down, and thus incorporated into the new. The present mansion stands on the foundations of the old Chatsworth begun by Sir William Cavendish and finished by his redoubtable widow, Bess of Hardwick. It has been remodelled, partly rebuilt, and enlarged several times, one of the builders being the fourth Earl (later the first Duke) of Devonshire. He was banished from Court by James II in 1687 for brawling in Whitehall Palace with Colonel Culpepper, whom he struck with his cane. Laws against any form of fighting within the Palace were very strict, and after being sentenced to a fine of £30,000 the Earl fled to Derbyshire. He arrested the men sent to arrest him, but finally was forced to give a bond pledging himself to pay the fine. Fortunately for him James fled the country, and the bond was destroyed when William III came to the throne.

Chatsworth owes much of its fame to its setting, with sloping woodlands behind, and the lovely Derwent river in front—a setting which has been admired by happier royalty than Mary Queen of Scots. Queen Victoria visited the manor, arriving at dusk to be greeted with a flourish of fireworks. Her horses had been well trained in advance. Edward VII and his son, later George V, used to go there for pheasant-shooting. Both of them were skilled shots.

The owners are the Chatsworth Estates Company. The gardens are open to the public daily, the house most days between the middle of March and the middle of October.

HARDWICK HALL* is the only one of all Bess of Hardwick's manors standing as she built it. She built five altogether—Chatsworth, Hardwick, Bolsover, Worksop, and Oldcotes. Chatsworth and Worksop have been rebuilt.

Hardwick Hall
More glass than wall

was a description in an old jingle. The Hall is indeed remarkable for the astonishing number of windows it contains, and for six towers, each 100 feet high. It is not a handsome building, but the High Great Chamber has been called "the most beautiful room in the whole of Europe." Altogether it took Bess six years to build this mansion, which stands in well-wooded country, and still contains priceless antiques, tapestries, and paintings, and some exquisite needlework from Mary Queen of Scots' "nydill."

Like Chatsworth, Hardwick Hall is owned by the Chatsworth Estates Company. It is open to the public several times a week from mid-April till the end of summer.

Bess of Hardwick's mansion of BOLSOVER* was completed long after her death. Although it is partly in ruins, and has not been lived in for many years, the old mansion is still of great interest. It stands on a hill, and the great stone terrace commands a fine view over the rich countryside. For Bess did better for her children than she knew. Not only did she build five manors, but, unknown to her, the properties contained rich deposits of coal and iron. So Bess, the old schemer after money and position, must be sleeping very contentedly.

The best-preserved part of old Bolsover is the keep, built for Sir Charles Cavendish, Bess's youngest son. The keep has interesting panelled rooms containing remarkable stone chimney-pieces and mural paintings.

Bolsover is now owned by the Ministry of Works, and is open to the public.

THE OLD CORES that Bess of Hardwick built was taken down about 1708. For a long time before that it had been neglected and empty, and had become a home for owls. The house which now stands on the same site—and it is now a farmhouse of considerable size—was built with the stone taken from the old house. It is a dignified house, which looks across the valley to Hardwick House, towering above the surrounding trees.

Bess's manor of WORKSOP, in Nottinghamshire, was destroyed by fire in 1761, but it was rebuilt, and stands handsomely in a large park. The ownership of the manor figured in a Court of Claims judgment in 1953 before the Coronation of Elizabeth II. By ancient privilege the right to present a glove for the sovereign's right hand, and to support the sovereign's right arm when the sceptre is held, belonged to the owner of the Manor of Worksop. He performed these rights owing to tenure of land by grand serjeanty—a system of holding land from the sovereign in return for fulfilling special obligations. This form of tenure was abolished in 1660, but the honorary Coronation duties, which were jealously guarded privileges, were expressly excluded.

These Coronation privileges would normally have fallen to the Duke of Newcastle, as Lord of the Manor of Worksop. Some years ago, however, the present Duke merged much of his property, including Worksop Manor, into a limited liability company. The company applied to the Court of Claims for the traditional privileges, but their claim was rejected.

At the Coronation of Elizabeth II, Lord Woolton, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, presented the glove, so preserving a centuries-old part of the Coronation ritual. The glove, of white kid lined with

royal red silk, embroidered in gold thread with the rose, the thistle, and the shamrock, was contained in a casket specially fashioned from oak from the timbers of Nelson's old flagship, *Victory*.

LYME PARK* now belongs to the National Trust, after having belonged to the Legh family for some six hundred years. The architecture is mainly Tudor, with Georgian wings. It is a fine old house standing on the slopes of the Pennines, and in the spring is surrounded by a wealth of flowering hawthorn. At one time Lyme Park was noted for its breed of mastiffs, some of which James I sent as a present to Philip of Spain. The house is still renowned for its collection of tapestries and furniture. In the Stag Parlour are some Chippendale chairs covered by parts of the cloak worn by Charles I on the scaffold.

Both the house and the park are open part of every day.

Still in the possession of the Legh family is ADLINGTON HALL,* also in Cheshire, at Macclesfield. They have owned the Hall since the fourteenth century. It is a charming, typical black-and-white Cheshire half-timbered house, built round a courtyard. The sixteenth-century Great Hall is remarkable for its pillars—originally trees growing on the spot—for its timber roof, and for its heraldic canopy.

The house is open to the public two or three times a week between Easter and the end of September.

NEIGHBOURING PLEASURES

Such pleasures must begin with the romantic, always believed, but never proved story of Dorothy Vernon of HADDON HALL.* It is the kind of romance we would all like to believe in—if not to experience—and that is no doubt why the story has persisted through the centuries. Of course, there are many versions. Even if true, it was too good a story not to embellish.

Dorothy Vernon was the youngest daughter and co-heiress of Sir George Vernon, whose "magnificence was princely and hospitality immense." His magnificence was so princely, in fact, that he was known as the King of the Peak.

Dorothy had been betrothed (against her will, of course!) to Edward Stanley, the younger son of the Earl of Derby. His elder brother, Sir Thomas, was betrothed to her sister Margaret, but the idea of a double wedding held no charm for Dorothy. She was in love with John Manners, son of the Earl of Rutland.

Sir George was not lost in his princely magnificence. He realized well enough which way the wind was blowing, and he kept so close a watch on Dorothy that she was virtually a prisoner in Haddon Hall.

But John Manners was not to be defeated so easily. He disguised himself as a forester, and haunted the Haddon Woods. Now and again the lovers stole a secret meeting, sealed with a stolen kiss.

On the eve of the supposed double wedding a big ball was held in the Long Gallery at Haddon Hall. It was a lovely night for lovers, with a full moon shining down on the great beeches and hawthorn-trees. Quietly Dorothy slipped out of the Long Gallery, down the semicircular flight of steps cut from a single tree in the park, out of "Dorothy Vernon's Door," romantically hung with ivy, and into the arms of her lover. John Manners had swift horses waiting, and together they rode through the night to Leicestershire, where they were married the next day.

The Long Gallery, 110 feet long and built of silver-grey oak, was actually completed by John Manners after his marriage to Dorothy Vernon, which, elopement or no, did take place. The present owner, the Duke of Rutland, is their descendant. The semicircular steps down which Dorothy is supposed to have run were not built until 1650—more than half a century after her supposed elopement—but the story is a charming one, for all its inaccuracies, and, though it was not first written up till the eighteenth century, a good story is always worth the telling.

The romantic towers of Haddon Hall still stand beside the Wye river, and, apart from its romantic associations, the Hall is famous for its spectacular hanging gardens, which were evolved between 1500 and 1650. The Hall is open to the public every day (except Sunday) between the beginning of April and the end of October.

Haddon Hall and its ownership is a good example of how the history of one 'stately home' or castle is interwoven with others. In fact, they are almost impossible to isolate, for by isolation half the story is lost. In reality so many of them are linked, one with another, and woven inextricably into the pattern and fabric of English domestic and royal history.

The Manners family also owned BELVOIR CASTLE,* and the now ruined HELMSLEY CASTLE.¹

Helmsley Castle is also an excellent illustration of how the domestic life of England was inseparable from the times. The castle was owned by several families before Edward Manners, third Earl of Rutland,

¹ See Chapter I.

came into possession of it in 1563. The castle was strongly garrisoned by Charles I during the Civil War, and was one of the first strongholds to be attacked by the Parliamentary leader Sir Thomas Fairfax, who received a musket-shot in his shoulder during the battle.

The Manners family were ousted, and Helmsley Castle given as a reward to Fairfax himself. But it returned to a Manners descendant, the second Duke of Buckingham, as part of Mary Fairfax's dowry. Buckingham was the son of Lady Katherine Manners, one of the Manners of Belvoir Castle, and George Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham. Thus within one generation the castle had been lost to one branch of the family, and regained by relatives, all through the occurrence of the Civil War.

After establishing himself at Helmsley Castle, in 1670, Buckingham devoted much of his time to training racehorses and to raising packs of hounds for fox- and stag-hunting. The present packs in the district are said to be descendants of those introduced by Buckingham getting on for three hundred years ago.

With so deep an interest in hunting and fox-hounds, it is not surprising that the Duke has been seen hunting with a ghostly pack at Kirby Moorside, not far from Helmsley Castle.

The next pleasure must be to visit EYAM (pronounced Eem), to the north of Haddon Hall, past Chesterfield, though its story of proud courage is very different from the gay romance of Dorothy Vernon. It is a story interwoven with the story of the Cavendishes and the Talbots (into whose families Bess of Hardwick and two of her children married), for both families at times owned Eyam manor. It was the Earl of Devonshire (who was a Cavendish) who owned the manor at the time of the Great Plague, and it was he who organized supplies of food to be sent to the stricken and self-isolated and heroic little village. He himself remained at one of Bess's mansions—Chatsworth—but he paid for all the necessities for the village for its year of quarantine, during which the population fell from 360 to a mere 33.

Shortly after the outbreak of the Great Plague in 1665 the Eyam village tailor received a box of tailor's samples from London. He handed the box to his servant, George Vicars, to open. Within three days the dreaded plague spots had appeared on Vicars' chest, and he died after infecting all the household. The tailor also died; then four of his neighbours; then twenty-two; then fifty-six. The other villagers were terrified, and would have fled, but their young rector, William Mompesson, inspired them with his own courage, and persuaded them to stay and keep their infection to themselves. His children, George and

Elizabeth, had been sent away to relatives in Yorkshire at the first threat of danger, but his wife stayed with Mompesson. Soon she caught the Plague and died too—with seventy-six others—and there is still in existence a letter from Mompesson to his two children telling them of their mother's death. But in spite of the constant deaths the rest of the villagers of Eyam stood by their promise not to cross a "circle" drawn about the village. The "circle" was a roughly defined line about half a mile outside the village, marked by landmarks such as well-known stones and trees. Two or three places were set aside as receiving depots for the supplies from the Earl of Cavendish, one of them being called to this day "Mompesson's Well" or "Brook."

The year's isolation of the little village is commemorated annually on Plague Sunday, the last Sunday in August. The service is held out-of-doors, where Mompesson held his services, so that the villagers ran less risk of contaminating one another. But in spite of all his precautions—which included making the children take up smoking—eight out of every nine people who stayed within the Plague "circle" died during that dreadful year.

The National Trust now owns the Riley Graves at Eyam, where seven members of the Hancock family who died during one awful August week in 1665 are buried. They have also been given covenants over Righ Lea, a meadow where the graves lie and from which they derive their name.

When old Simon de Montfort, who once owned Kenilworth Castle, was killed in the fierce Battle of Evesham, one of his followers, according to Derbyshire legend, was the fabulous Little John. Little John was certainly a Derbyshire man. Possibly he was born at HATHERSAGE, just north of Eyam, the Plague village. When Robin Hood knew he was dying he asked his old friend and lieutenant, Little John, to bury him at Kirkles Park, Yorkshire. This Little John did, and afterwards, feeling his own end drawing near, he yearned for the familiar scenes of his boyhood. He died in a cottage near Hathersage church, and was buried between two yew-trees. His grave is now tended by members of the Ancient Order of Foresters Friendly Society.

Hathersage has other claims to fame. Charlotte Brontë stayed at the vicarage for a while with Miss Nussey, the vicar's sister. Two years later she wrote *Jane Eyre*, and the Morton in the novel was Hathersage in reality.

Robin Hood himself was born at WAKEFIELD, in Yorkshire, about 1290. Half legend, or wholly true? It matters no more with Robin Hood

than it does with King Arthur. Both of them are real enough in the places that matter—in our hearts and minds.

Robin Hood's father, Adam, was a forester in the service of the Earl of Warenne, lord of the manor of Wakefield. Wolves were still common enough in Yorkshire in those days (the last one was killed by John of Gaunt in 1380), and Adam Hood, and probably his son with him, was kept busy killing wolves and generally protecting the Earl's deer, grouse, pheasants, and partridges from wild animals and poachers.

In 1322 some two thousand men were raised from the manors of Wakefield and Pontefract to support the Earl of Lancaster against his cousin Edward II, and his favourites, Piers Gaveston and the Despencers. Robin Hood was one of the archers who enlisted, but Lancaster was defeated. He took refuge in a chapel in Boroughbridge, but he was dragged out by the King's soldiers, and after a mock trial at his own castle of Pontefract he was condemned to death.

"Have mercy on me, King of Heaven!" he cried as, mounted on a grey pony, he was hurried to his execution. "Have mercy on me, for my earthly King has forsaken me!"

Robin and the rest of the defeated army were outlawed.

Robin and his wife, Maid Marian, whom he had married some time previously, fled to the Forest of Barnsdale, and there he gathered round him his famous band of followers. In the summer they wore uniforms of Lincoln green, in the winter less conspicuous uniforms of palest grey.

The city of Lincoln was an early and important centre of weaving, notable particularly for woollen cloth in two special colours—Lincoln-green and scarlet. Robin Hood and his "merry men" wore short scarlet cloaks over their Lincoln-green tunics, topping their caps with tail-feathers from a pheasant. Their arrows were tipped with grey goose-feathers, their bows were of seasoned yew, and with these weapons they held up and robbed fat priests and merchants who ventured through the forest, keeping only enough of their spoils for their own needs, and giving the rest to the poor.

When old and ill Robin Hood

repayred to the priores of Kyrkesley, which some say was his cousin, a woman very skylful in physique and surgery; who perceyving him to be Robyn Hood, and waying howe fell an enemy he was to religious persons, toke revenge of him for her owne house and al others, by letting him bleed to death; and she buryed him under a greate stone, by the hywaye's syde.

As Robin lay dying he blew three weak blasts on his horn. They were heard by his faithful Little John, who hurried to his side.

"I fear my master is near dead,
He blows so wearily," he said.

When he found how the great outlaw had been treated by his cousin the prioress he begged Robin to let him burn down the nunnery in revenge.

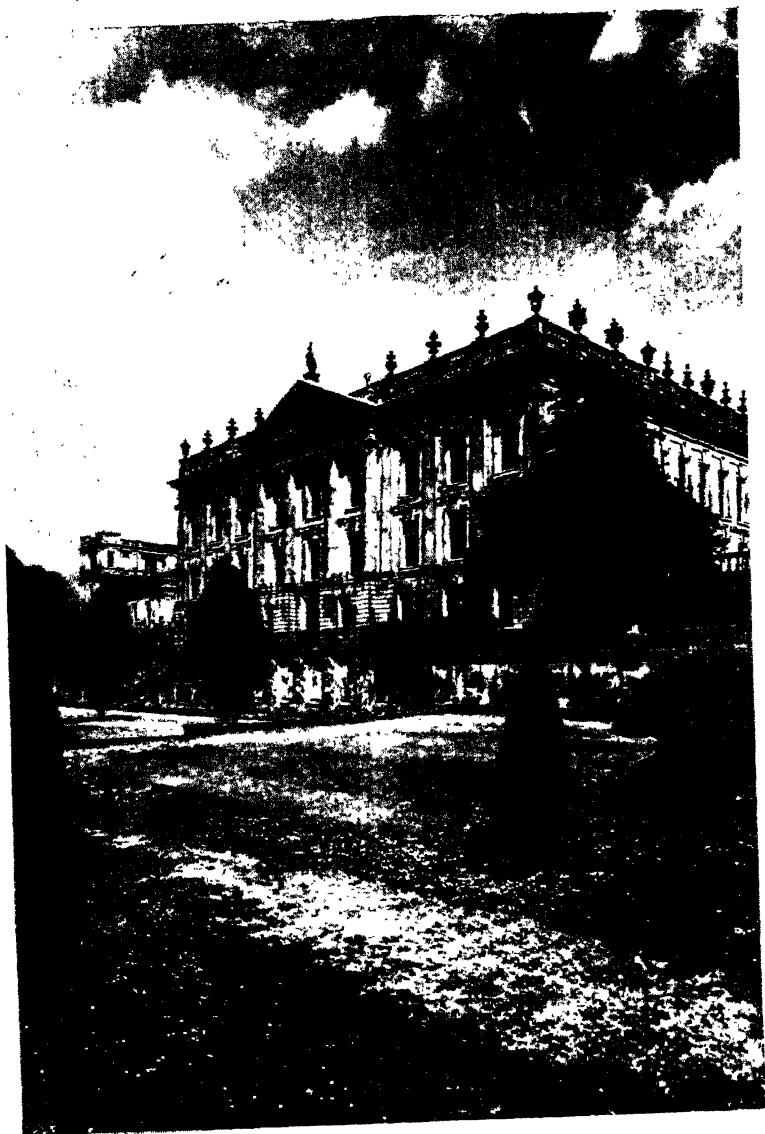
"Now nay, now nay," quoth Robin Hood,
"That boon I'll not grant thee.
I ne'er hurt a woman in my life,
Nor man in woman's company.
I ne'er hurt a woman in my life,
Nor at the end shall it be;
But give me my bent bow in my hand,
And a broad arrow I'll let flee;
And where this arrow is taken up,
There shall my grave digg'd be."

So Little John gave the dying man his bow and arrow, and from a little window Robin Hood fired his last arrow. It fell 575 yards away. He was buried there, at Kirkless Park, Yorkshire, near Huddersfield. Superstition soon spread the story that a piece of Robin's tombstone would cure toothache, and pieces of the stone were secretly chipped off at night.

There are stories of Robin Hood associated with many different localities and periods. If he did fight for the Earl of Lancaster against Edward II and his favourites, then he must have lived in the early fourteenth century, for Lancaster was beheaded in 1322. But other stories say that between 1189 and 1199 Robin Hood fought for Richard I against the misrule of his brother John; that he was outlawed after the Battle of Evesham in 1265, when Little John fought for Simon de Montfort, and that he attended the celebrations following the election of a King of the Musicians at Tutbury Castle during John of Gaunt's time towards the end of the fourteenth century. So Robin is a legend that has travelled over the centuries as well as across the country.

Besides Wakefield and Kirkless, Yorkshire associations with Robin Hood include FOUNTAINS ABBEY.* There, on the south side of the stream running through the grounds, is a well still bearing his name in memory of his fight with "the curtall friar of Fountains." His bow and one of his arrows were said to be preserved at Fountains, where a large bow and arrow, and a hound, were graven on one of the walls of the Lady Chapel.

Fountains Abbey was one of those destroyed by order of Henry VIII. After he had stripped the Abbey of its treasures he sold the land and the buildings to Sir Richard Gresham, father of the founder of the



CHATSWORTH HOUSE
Photo British Travel Association



HADDON HALL

Photo British Travel Association

Royal Exchange, and father of the Christian Gresham who married Sir John Thynne, of LONGLEAT.*¹

The monks of Fountains Abbey once drew, on donkey-skin, a plan of the old castle of KNARESBOROUGH, showing a secret well down which Charles I is supposed to have hidden some of the Stuart jewels during the Civil War. The old map was still in existence at the beginning of this century, and the search for it has never been given up.

Knaresborough Castle is now almost a complete ruin, but it was once a great stronghold, dating from Norman times, and owned by one powerful family after another. One of its owners was Hugh de Morville, one of the murderers of Thomas à Becket. He and his three companions fled there after their terrifying experience at South Malling,² when the table in the house where they were staying on their flight from Canterbury flung their arms on to the floor.

Knaresborough is famous for the old witch Mother Shipton, who lived in a cave near the Dropping Well, and achieved the almost impossible by dying in her bed, instead of at the stake. Cardinal Wolsey had promised her a burning, too. When she heard that he was going to York she predicted that he might see the city, but that he would never enter it. Wolsey was so furious that he sent three courtiers, including the young Lord Percy³ who loved Anne Boleyn, to interview Mother Shipton, and to tell her that the Cardinal had promised to burn her as soon as he entered York. The three men went in disguise, but she was not one whit put out by that, or by their threat. She greeted them all by name, and after refreshing them with cakes and ale sent them about their business.

Not long afterwards Cardinal Wolsey visited Cawood, eight miles from York. As he saw the city in the distance, he remembered his promise to Mother Shipton, and said, "When I am come there she shall burn as a witch." But Mother Shipton was right. Wolsey never did reach York. He was arrested that night—by young Lord Percy—and died shortly afterwards at Leicester.

Although the good witch died peacefully in her bed, there were, of course, stories of her miraculous disappearance from earth. One said that when she was summoned to answer the charge of witchcraft she cried, "Updraxi, call Stygian Helluei," whereupon a winged dragon appeared out of nowhere and carried her off in a clap of thunder.

Between Bolsover and Worksop lies WELBECK ABBEY, which the indefatigable Bess of Hardwick bought for her son Charles Cavendish.

¹ See Chapter II. ² See Chapter VI, under Saltwood Castle. ³ See Chapter III.

His son William, who became first Duke of Newcastle, was so idolized by his wife that Pepys despised them both! Writing on April 11, 1667, Pepys said:

The whole story of this lady is a romance, and all she do is romantic. Her footman in velvet coats and herself in an antique dress, as they say; and was the other day at her own play, 'The Humorous Lovers'; the most ridiculous thing that ever was wrote, but yet she and her Lord mightily pleased with it.

Again, on March 18, 1668, Pepys wrote:

. . . Stayed at home, reading the ridiculous History of my Lord Newcastle wrote by his wife, which shews her to be a mad, conceited, ridiculous woman, and he an asse to suffer her to write what she writes to him and of him.

John Evelyn's wife shared Pepys's opinion!

Welbeck Abbey has now become an Army "Public School" for training technically qualified officers. The students, of sixteen years and over, take a two-year course at the beautiful old Abbey, specializing in mathematical and scientific subjects. The grounds have always been famous for their oaks, one of which had an arch cut into its trunk in 1724.

Hatfield House stands in a district redolent with romance. In a semi-circle to the north are BUNTINGFORD, where a doctor ran a successful sideline as a highwayman; HITCHIN, where lived a Quaker who was a spy; and MARKYATE CELL, where a bored wife turned 'highwayman' in the time of the Civil War.

William Skelton, who practised (in two senses) at Buntingford, had an adventurous and entertaining career. After spending all his wife's money he fled to Antigua. He did well out there, and missed his wife so much that he returned to England, setting up as a doctor, at Buntingford. He did well out there, but missed his wife so much that he returned to England, setting up as a doctor at Buntingford in the early eighteenth century. Though Skelton prospered, he soon found life in the provinces lacking in excitement, and the good doctor, possessing a good horse, good pistols, and a flair for adventure, took to highway robbery as a sideline. He did well at this too, but at last, in 1732, some one recognized him and gave his secret away to the authorities. He was arrested, though not before his wife had had a good fight with the constable herself. He was, alas, hanged at Tyburn; alas, because so adventurous a spirit is all too rare.

At Hitchin lived another type of adventurer, William Bromfield, a

Quaker, a quack doctor, a spy, and a royal favourite. He enjoyed a two-sided life, if not a double one. As a favourite, he knew the secrets of the Court. As a prisoner, he knew the secrets of both the infamous Newgate gaol and the Bastille. He died in 1729, and was buried in the Quakers' section of the famous Bunhill Fields cemetery, London.

During the Civil War there lived at Markyate Cell (once an ancient priory) a bored and neglected wife, Catherine, Lady Ferrers. Like Dr Skelton, of Buntingford, Lady Ferrers took to the highway to relieve her boredom—and out of sheer love of excitement. Her valiant 'accomplice' was her ink-black horse with four white feet, and together they sped through the shadows on moonless nights, robbing late wayfarers—and killing them too, if they showed fight. Stories of what became of the lady vary considerably. Some say that she was shot, but that her horse took her home. She tried to reach a secret room she had prepared for such an emergency, staggering up a concealed staircase as the blood gushed out of her wounds. But she died on the stairs, and there her body was found. Other stories say she was caught red-handed and hanged.

But every one agrees that her ghost haunts the neighbourhood of Markyate Cell.

Another entirely remarkable woman was Lady Cathcart, of TEWIN. She was a Londoner by birth, the daughter of a Southwark brewer, and she became the mistress of Tewin Manor by her first marriage. But she was soon a widow, soon married again; widowed again, married again—this time to Lord Cathcart—and widowed again within the year. By then she was fifty-seven, but she was swept off her feet by a wild young Irish officer, Hugh McGuire, and was soon married once more.

In later years Lady Cathcart used to say that her first marriage was to please her parents, her second was for money, her third was for a title, and the fourth "because the Devil owed me a grudge."

McGuire's only interest in his elderly wife was her money, and straight after the wedding he hustled her off to his Irish castle, and for twenty years kept her a prisoner, locked in a large bedroom, because she refused to make over her property to him.

The whole neighbourhood seems to have known of her plight, but the neighbours lacked chivalry and courage, for they left the poor lady to lament in almost solitary confinement. When there were guests at the castle McGuire forced them to carry out the farce of drinking his wife's health, while a servant was sent upstairs to inquire if there was anything she needed. McGuire was too good a duellist to quarrel with,

but eventually the prisoner did find a champion, and McGuire was taken back to the castle, dead and stiff on the floorboards of a cart.

On hearing the glad news Lady Cathcart went downstairs for the first time for twenty years, ragged, bewildered, but indomitable.

She packed her belongings and hurried back to Tewin, where she lived for another twenty years. She soon recovered her health and spirits, and became the dancing Lady Cathcart. She danced right up to the time of her death, a doughty old lady of ninety-seven.

About half-way between Buntingford and Markyate Cell is KNEBWORTH HOUSE,* an enormous Victorian mansion which is the fourth built by the Lytton family on the same site since 1492. A famous father, son, and grandson have all owned Knebworth.

The father was Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, first Baron Lytton, the famous novelist and statesman.

The son was Robert, first Earl of Lytton, Viceroy of India and Ambassador in Paris—and a poet known under the name of Owen Meredith.

The grandson was Victor, second Earl of Lytton, Governor of Bengal and Viceroy of India.

The house contains many fine paintings, and many associations with Disraeli, Charles Dickens, and other friends of Sir Edward who visited Knebworth. The house is open to the public several days a week between the beginning of May and the end of September.

Some of the panelling from Nonsuch Palace, where the dishevelled Earl of Essex strode into Elizabeth's bedchamber, is now in LOSELEY HOUSE,* near Guildford, Surrey. Some of it is quite remarkable, two long "corridors" carved on a door being, in fact, only a quarter of an inch deep! The house is an elegant Tudor stone building, set amid magnificent parkland. It was built in 1562 by Sir William More, an ancestor of the present owner and occupier.

Queen Elizabeth, James I, and our present Queen's grandmother Queen Mary, all visited Loseley House, and scenes from the film *The Silent Dust* were shot there.

The house only is open to the public several afternoons a week between May and October.

A ghost far unhappier than Lady Ferrers' can still be heard crying through the night near Peterborough, at the scene of a battle fought long ago at WOODCROFT MANOR. During the Civil War one of the King's chaplains, Dr Michael Hudson, putting off his clerical uniform

and donning a soldier's, collected a band of men prepared to fight as guerrillas. After many adventures they were eventually forced to retreat to Woodcroft Manor, hotly pursued by Cromwellian troops. Gallantly they fought from room to room, giving no quarter, asking none. They fought up the staircases inch by inch, and on to the roof, facing overwhelming odds with deadly skill—and with a desperate vow to sell their lives as dearly as they could. As the day closed in all the men were killed but Hudson, and he was fighting for his life on the parapet. At last he was forced over the parapet. His sword dropped into the moat below, and he clung on to the edge of the parapet with his fingers. He refused all demands to surrender. An officer cut off his fingers, and with a cry he hurtled down into the moat, where his sword already lay.

And still the clash of steel is sometimes heard, and the cries of "Mercy! Mercy!" shouted by the defenceless chaplain.

The most important 'neighbouring pleasure' is, of course, WARWICK CASTLE,* which became the property of Ambrose Dudley, Leicester's elder brother.

Warwick Castle is as old as England itself. It was mentioned as a royal demesne in Domesday Book. Its story is rich with legend and fact, and the Warwick Castle of to-day is one of the most excitingly magnificent castles in England. Its site is perfection, with great walls rising sheer from the Avon, and with its hundred-yard approach hewn from the rock and swinging in a curve up to the sweeping lawns and the castle itself. Ivy hangs in a curtain over the rock-face. It is not difficult to imagine all the magnificent processions in the full panoply of war and entertainment that have clattered up and down that rock-hewn road to the castle.

One of the early builders of Warwick Castle was Ethelfleda, Alfred the Great's daughter, who was as remarkable a builder as she was a fighter. She established a chain of fortresses against the Danes, and built one at Warwick.

Most of the legends of Warwick centre on Guy, a giant-killer of large proportions and of such incredible adventures that beside him Jack the Giant-killer appears a mere kindergarten fighter. He met in single combat a Saracen giant named Colbrand, serving with the Danish Army. The fight took place near Winchester, and went on all day long, growing fiercer and more gory as the day proceeded. Colbrand sliced off the head of Guy's horse with one clean sweep of his sword, but Guy scored a more telling blow, and cut off the Saracen's head.

Guy loved a wayward, wilful creature named Felyce, but he spent

little time at home. He rescued a maiden in distress in Normandy, relieved Byzantium, and slew the Sultan, killed a dragon in Northumberland, and slew a monstrous Dun Cow "six yards in length . . . with fiery eyes" that was causing "dreadful havock" near Warwick. A rib of the great beast was hung up in the castle.

When he finally decided to settle down he lived not with Felyce, but in "Guy's Cave," near the castle. His son Reynborn had an almost equally adventurous and complicated life, being stolen by the Russians and sold to a heathen king.

"Guy's Porridge Pot," still exhibited at the castle, is more likely to be a fourteenth-century garrison cooking-pot than a relic of the large giant-killer. It holds 120 gallons.

In 1264 Warwick Castle was sacked and so badly damaged that it was almost entirely rebuilt by the next owners—six Beauchamp earls who followed in succession. One of them was Guy Beauchamp, the Black Dog of Arden. "Guy's Tower," which he did not build, commemorates his name, not that of the fictitious Guy the Giant-killer. The other tower, called Cæsar's, and rising to a height of 147 feet, is the oldest part of the castle.

Guy Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, had been christened "the Black Dog of Arden" by the nickname-loving Piers Gaveston, the witty, flamboyant, and dissolute young favourite of the weak young King Edward II. Guy, who, like the rest of England hated Gaveston, snarled in reply, "Does he call me dog? Let him take care lest I bite!"

Five men swore to kill Gaveston. Guy Beauchamp was one of them, and he arranged a tournament to be held at Warwick Castle, as an excuse for a gathering of armed men. Gaveston was captured at Scarborough Castle, taken to Warwick, and there "tried," quite illegally, in the Great Hall of the castle. After sentence he was taken to Blacklow Hill, near by, stabbed and beheaded.

The castle changed hands many times before Leicester's father, John Dudley, had himself created Earl of Warwick, and obtained possession of the castle. His possessions and titles were forfeited when he (and his son Guildford) were executed after the plot to put Lady Jane Grey on the throne. But Mary had his elder surviving son, Ambrose, "restored in blood," and regranted earldom, castle, and estates.

Ambrose was a capable man, and, surprisingly enough, something of a Puritan. He married three times, but his only child died young, and on his death the title once again lapsed.

James I gave the castle to Sir Fulke Greville, later Baron Brooke, who had to spend £30,000 repairing it, for it had fallen into considerable decay. Sir Fulke's descendants still own the castle. For about a

hundred and fifty years the title and the ownership of the castle were divorced, as James bestowed one on one man, one on another. But they were reunited in 1759, and have been in the one family ever since.

Warwick Castle contains one of the finest collections of paintings in England, including royal portraits by Van Dyck of Charles I and Henrietta Maria, and Holbein's Anne Boleyn, as well as his very famous portrait of the square-faced Henry VIII. Among its many fine suits of armour is a pathetic little suit made for "the noble impe," the three-or-four-year-old hunchback son of Leicester and Lettice Knollys.

The Dun Cow which Guy of Warwick killed was one of the fairy cows which appear in many stories in both England and Ireland. Their milk was invariably enough to supply a whole town or settlement—and they never ran dry. This Dun Cow is said to appear in ghostly form whenever death threatens the Earl of Warwick's family. The great rib, more than seven feet long, which was hung up in the castle after Guy's great feat, is now said to be preserved in the Foljambe Chapel in Warwick.

The Dun Cow is said to have been seen in fairly recent times, but she is never heard; nor do her hooves leave any marks, no matter where she walks.

Warwick Castle is open to the public on week-days all the year round.

Between Warwick Castle and Kenilworth once stood WROXALL ABBEY, founded for Benedictine monks in the reign of Henry I. The story of the foundation of the Abbey is a charming one. In the twelfth century the manor of Wroxall belonged to a certain Hugh de Hatton. For many long years he had been a prisoner in the Holy Land, but he never gave up hope, and he prayed nightly for deliverance. St Leonard heard his prayers, and transported the patient warrior—fettters and all—back to Wroxall, where he was reunited with his wife. At first she did not recognize him, and it was only when he showed her his half of a ring they had divided before his departure that she knew her long-lost husband had been restored to her.

In gratitude for his release (and transportation home) Hugh de Hatton founded Wroxall Abbey.

A few miles north of Kenilworth is COVENTRY, for ever famous for a story which has persisted year after year, generation after generation—the story of Lady Godiva.

Lady Godiva was the beautiful and devout wife of Leofric, Earl of Mercia in the reign of Edward the Confessor. He was a man of many talents, and was one of the three great earls in England at that time.

The others were Siward of Northumbria and Godwin of Wessex, father of King Harold, who was slain at the Battle of Hastings.

Leofric and Godiva founded a Benedictine monastery in Coventry. Godiva was much loved and Leofric much respected by the people, who nevertheless found the heavy dues and taxes demanded by the Earl an insufferable burden. Godiva pleaded their cause, till Leofric, with husbandly impatience, replied that if she would ride naked through the town he would, on her return, grant her what she asked.

So Lady Godiva freed the town from its heavy tributes

by vndertaking a hard and vnseemly taske, wch was to ride naked openly, at high noone through the city, upon a milke white steed, wch she willingly performed, according to her lord's strict injunction. . . . Her fayre long hayre did much to offend the wanton's glancing eye.

The introduction of "Peeping Tom" into the legend (the 'peeper' who was struck blind for his curiosity) did not occur till the seventeenth century.

The ride of Lady Godiva through Coventry was not her only claim to fame. She is supposed to have been the mother of Hereward the Wake,¹ the last dauntless defender to hold out against William the Conqueror. Hereward, who had been outlawed, held out with a desperate band of followers in the fen country round Ely.

For many years Lady Godiva's ride was celebrated with an annual procession at the Great Fair at Whitsun, but since the middle of the last century the procession has taken place less regularly, sometimes at five-or seven-year intervals. During the present century there have been only seven processions, mainly as special celebrations, such as in the Festival of Britain year in 1951. Lady Godiva has been played by actresses, a champion swimmer, a circus performer, and others, riding in various degrees of nudity on a white horse.

She is now permanently commemorated by a charming bronze statue by Sir William Reid Dick. The statue, which cost £20,000, stands in an island-garden in Broadgate, and is a lovely reminder of a beautiful, real, and legendary woman.

The manor of Worksop and the ancient Coronation privileges that once belonged to it had their counterpart in various other land tenures, both royal and private. During the coronation of Elizabeth II the right to carry the Union Standard was a privilege which fell to Captain J. L. M. Dymoke, hereditary holder of the title of Queen's (or King's)

¹ See Chapter III, under Arundel.

Champion, by virtue of holding the Manor of SCRIVELSBY, in Lincolnshire. The King's Champion formerly rode into Westminster Hall during the Coronation Banquet and challenged "any person, of what ever degree soever, high or low (who) shall deny or gainsay our sovereign." It was a ceremony always held, from the time of the Coronation of Richard II right up to the time of George IV. When the Banquet was discontinued the Dymokes were given the right to carry the Union Standard or the Standard of England as a compensation.

There are many interesting instances of odd land tenures in England, not necessarily involving the sovereign, though the ancient manor of PUSEY, in Berkshire, near Cumnor Hall, where Amy Robsart died, involved a special gift from King Canute. Canute is said to have visited the old settlement of Pusey in 1015 or 1016, but the story that he gave William Pusey (or Pewse) the manor as a reward for revealing an Anglo-Saxon conspiracy is probably a romantic fiction. If, as is usually believed, the lands were held by the right of Cornage (that is, by rent fixed by the number of cattle on the property) the Horn would be the visible sign of ownership or tenancy.

The Horn is of ox or buffalo, mounted near the centre with a silver-gilt ring. It is a charming 'creature-like' affair, with two skinny, rather pigeon-toed legs affixed to the band. The point is decorated with a small dog's head. In James II's reign the manor was recovered in a lawsuit by the production of the Pusey Horn, which Judge Jeffreys, of the "Bloody Assizes" fame, said he recognized as the genuine Horn presented by King Canute. The Horn was associated with Pusey till 1935. It was then presented to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, by Lucy Violet Bouverie-Pusey.

In the inscription on the metal band, which was added in the fifteenth century, the name Pusey has been mistakenly engraved as Pecote. The inscription reads:

I Kyng Knowde geve Wylyam Pecote
thys horne to holde by thy lond.

ASTLEY HALL, in Warwickshire, a few miles from Coventry, was held in Henry II's reign by Philip de Estley, of the Earl of Warwick, by service of holding the Earl's stirrup when he mounted or alighted from his horse. At one time it belonged to Lady Jane Grey's father, the Duke of Suffolk.¹ Legend says he hid there in a hollow tree after the failure of the plot to put Lady Jane on the throne, but was betrayed by

¹ See Chapter III.

the Keeper of his Park and arrested. His headless ghost has been seen even in the building which replaced the Hall he owned.

William the Conqueror parcelled out the royal estates at AYLESBURY, Buckinghamshire, under a singular tenure. All the tenants had to find litter or straw for the King's bedchamber thrice a year if he went that way so often, "to provide him with three eels in winter, and three green geese in summer." A few miles west of Aylesbury is BRILL. An ancient palace here was a favourite retreat of Edward the Confessor, who enjoyed hunting in the neighbourhood. During his reign the manor of Brill was held by the service of providing the King with a hundred capons during his stay at the palace.

South of Berkeley Castle, near Chipping Sodbury, is BADMINTON, the home of the Beaufort family since the demolition of Raglan Castle during the Civil Wars. The present Badminton House was built in the reign of Charles II, and stands in a beautiful setting of parkland, with avenues of oaks, elms, and beeches. The Beauforts who own the House are descendants of John of Gaunt and his mistress (and third wife), Catherine Swynford, whose children were legitimized by an Act of Parliament—the same John of Gaunt who so loved Kenilworth, and who instituted the election of a King of the Minstrels at Tutbury Castle.

In 1949 the present Duke of Beaufort inaugurated the Three Days' Test for horse and rider, which has become an annual event, and attracts more than 30,000 spectators each year. The Queen is among the enthusiastic followers of the Tests, and she and the Duke of Edinburgh and other members of the royal family have on several occasions watched the Tests from a farm-wagon.

The chief object of the Three Days' Test is to find suitable horses and riders to represent Great Britain in the Olympic Three Days' Trial, the most exhausting and searching examination for man and beast yet devised. An even higher degree of fitness, courage, and skill is required to win at Badminton—let alone at the Olympic Trials—than to win the Grand National.

Equestrian events in the Olympics are of very ancient origin, but they were discontinued for many years till 1912, when they were re-introduced. The Olympic Trial was originally designed to test a cavalry charger and his rider, and even now the majority of the competitors are military men. In 1912, when the Trial was reintroduced into the Olympics, and for many years after that, Britain was an unconsidered entrant in the event. Since the last War, however, Britain has won great success in equestrian events on the Continent, in Canada, and in

the United States, and at least one of her horses, Colonel Llewellyn's Foxhunter, has become a household word.

The Tests held at Badminton combine tests in obedience and *dressage* (which is really deportment), followed on the second day by a test of speed and endurance over twenty-one miles, including a two-mile steeplechase course and some thirty varied obstacles. The third day is devoted to jumping a show-jumping course to prove maintained fitness. The essential difference between these tests and other riding events is that in the Tests each competitor goes out alone, and alone is responsible for judgment of time and of his mount's fitness and capacity. All faults are heavily penalized, but horses and riders with a turn of speed can win good bonus marks by improving on the set time.

Dressage, which has always been popular on the Continent as a pastime in itself, has been a neglected art in England till the last few years. It really amounts to general obedience and the accurate performance of movements and paces taught to cavalymen and their horses as part of the general routine.

The Badminton Tests have proved so helpful and have attracted so much attention that one-day Tests are also held annually now in various parts of the country, such as Wellesbourne, near Warwick, Gisburn, in Yorkshire, and Epperstone, in Nottinghamshire.

As a spectacle the Tests are hard to beat, and at Badminton they are held in an incomparable setting.

The Princess Royal is another member of the royal family who is extremely interested in horses, being herself an excellent horsewoman. She and the Earl and Countess of Harewood have given permission for the British Horse Society's three-day horse trials to be held at HAREWOOD,* on the Leeds-Harrogate road, Yorkshire.

Harewood House, which is noted for the magnificent decoration of the interior, was begun in 1759 by Edwin Lascelles, whose ancestors had lived in Yorkshire since the time of Edward II. It is a many-gabled Jacobean brick house, a typical English country home, now mellowed in age. It is famous for its furniture, its paintings, and its handsome double staircase. The House is open to the public once or twice a week, according to the time of year.

The site of Harewood had long been built on. Even before William the Conqueror's day there were three manors of Harewood—owned by three Saxons with the excellent and satisfactory names of Tor, Sprot, and Grim!

An earlier house on the estate was Gawthorpe Hall, which at one time belonged to Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, Charles I's

friend who was executed. It was this Strafford who appeared as a ghost to King Charles before the Battle of Naseby,¹ urging him to avoid battle and march north.

There was another famous 'warning ghost' of Yorkshire. This was Nance, a farmer's daughter. She was betrothed to Tom, a farm-hand, but just before the wedding she lost her heart (or only, perhaps, her head) to a glib-tongued stranger from York, and she eloped and married him instead. Tom left the farm where he had been working, and became a coachman on the York-Hull route. About a year later, when he was driving back to York, he saw Nance sitting in the grass on the roadside, nursing a baby. She cried out to him to stop, and when he did so, and had clambered down out of his driver's seat, he found that Nance was dying. He lifted her and the baby tenderly into the coach, and drove them to a friend's house in York. Then he heard Nance's story. Her 'husband' had turned out to be a highwayman with a wife and family already, and Nance, heartbroken over her own treatment and repentant over her treatment of Tom, grasped his hand. "If my spirit is allowed to return," she whispered, "I will always warn you, your childer, and your childer's childer, of any coming danger."

Shortly afterwards Tom was sent to Durham to drive four important clients to York on urgent business for the King. They set out later than intended, and urged Tom to make all possible speed, promising him a guinea apiece if he reached York "by eight chimes."

All went well till the coach was some ten miles out of York, when a heavy fog rolled over the countryside, blotting out the road so completely that Tom was forced to pull his horses in to a walk. But at that very moment a ghostly figure took her place beside him, and laid her cold hands on the reins. Tom knew without a doubt that the ghost was Nance, and he handed over the reins without any hesitation. The ghost urged the horses into a gallop, the guard sounded his horn, and along that fog-shrouded road the swaying coach thundered through the dusk, scattering other travellers and leaving toll-gate keepers agape. The four startled travellers in the coach became terrified, and shouted to Tom to rein in his team and drive more carefully.

"Have no fear, gentlemen!" Tom cried back. "You are in safe hands, and you'll be in York by eight chimes!" He was right. The coach rattled over York's cobblestones and into the yard of the Black Swan just as the clocks were striking eight. And as the four men handed over their guineas to Tom the ghostly Nance vanished into the fog.

¹ See Chapter VII, under Neighbouring Pleasures.

VI

Murder!

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

FRANCES HOWARD, the beautiful, wicked daughter of the Earl of Suffolk, has pride of place in this chapter. With the blessing of

JAMES I she was married at the age of thirteen to

ROBERT DEVEREAUX, THIRD EARL OF ESSEX, the fourteen-year-old son of Elizabeth's favourite, of CHARTLEY, Staffordshire. After the marriage Frances returned home to AUDLEY END,* while Essex left on a Grand Tour. By the time Essex returned to claim his bride two years later Frances had fallen in love with

ROBERT CARR, the worthless, handsome young favourite of the King, who created him Viscount Rochester and later Earl of Somerset. Carr's influence at Court was directed by

SIR THOMAS OVERBURY, a man "of dark ability." He encouraged the liaison between the young Countess of Essex and Rochester, but opposed any suggestion of divorce and marriage, for that could only spell his ruin. The Countess of Essex had him poisoned in the Tower. She and Essex were divorced, she and Rochester (now created Earl of Somerset) married. Public outcry forced James to hold an inquiry into Overbury's death, and the Earl and Countess of Somerset were found guilty. James saved their lives, but banished them to ROTHERFIELD GREYS, near Henley-on-Thames. They later lived at CHISWICK HOUSE, London, which the Earl had to sell to provide a dowry for their daughter

ANNE CARR (born in the Tower during her mother's imprisonment), who wished to marry

LORD WILLIAM RUSSELL, son of the Earl of Bedford, of BEDFORD HOUSE on Chiswick Mall. Their son, another

LORD WILLIAM RUSSELL, was executed for his participation in the Rye House Plot to murder Charles II and the Duke of York. Also involved in the Plot—and executed—was a member of the remarkable Sidney family,

ALGERNON SIDNEY, born at PENSHURST,* Kent, like his famous uncle, Sir Philip Sidney.

The Russells were large landowners in Devon, and one of the family, Sir Francis, had been godfather to the great Elizabethan

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE, who once, for a day, owned the manor of GAYHURST, which later became one of the meeting-places for the Gunpowder Plotters.

MARGARET AUDLEY, who hardly appears in the story, was the daughter of the man who built Audley End. She died when only twenty-three years of age. She married

THOMAS HOWARD, fourth Duke of Norfolk, who later schemed to rescue and marry

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS.

By her marriage to Norfolk, Margaret Audley had two sons and three daughters. From the two sons are descended the Earls of Suffolk, Berkshire, Carlisle, and Bristol, as well as the Lords Howard de Walden and Howard of Escrick, while from one of her daughters,

MARGARET HOWARD, who married Robert Sackville, second Earl of Dorset, are descended the famous Sackvilles of KNOLE.*



VI

Many of the principals in the previous chapter are linked directly or indirectly with the infamous story of the Earl and Countess of Somerset. So is Sir Edward Coke of Stoke Poges.

The Countess of Somerset was first the wife of the new young Earl of Essex, another Robert Devereux, son of Elizabeth's favourite.

Coke it was who assisted the prosecution at the trial of Elizabeth's Essex.

Coke it was who conducted the prosecutions of the infamous Countess of Somerset and her husband for the murder of Thomas Overbury, and, though they were palpably guilty, he overpressed his case, and fell from favour. It was in manœuvring to win influential friends that he agreed to the wedding of his young daughter to the Duke of Buckingham's feeble-minded elder brother. The whole story is told in Chapter I. Its reappearance here shows once again how interlocked are the stories and adventures of those who held power and wealth—and, in the Countess of Somerset's case, wicked ambition and determination as well.

Robert Devereux, the third Earl of Essex, was only nine or ten when his father was executed, and he was only fourteen when (his titles and estates restored) he was married to the thirteen-year-old Frances Howard, daughter of the scheming Earl of Suffolk and his equally scheming wife, daughter of Sir Henry Knyvett, of Wiltshire.

Frances, Countess of Essex, grew into such a villainous woman it would be interesting to know what she was like as a child, but she would have had no more say in the choice of a groom than any other child of her period. Possibly less, because King James encouraged the marriage with fatherly enthusiasm, heartily supported by the child's ambitious mother. It was celebrated with *The Mask of Hymen*, produced by Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones, and allegorical dances performed in an atmosphere of splendour and merriment. After the marriage Frances returned home, and Essex set out with a tutor to travel. He returned two years later to claim his bride, by then a beautiful girl of fifteen. She would have nothing to do with him.

Frances's home was AUDLEY END,* the most magnificent mansion in the county of Essex, and a rival in splendour even to such palaces as Hampton Court and Richmond. She had nine brothers and sisters, and a beautiful mother, credited with bringing much misery and unhappiness to others. In that Frances followed in her footsteps.

The original house had been built by the rapacious Sir Thomas Audley, Chancellor to Henry VIII, who helped in the spoliation of the monasteries, and won for himself a Benedictine abbey. Part of the masonry he used for his house, which stood on the same site.

Sir Thomas's daughter and heiress, Margaret, had an interesting link with two other people in this story of the 'stately homes.' Her two husbands were both men involved in plots to put another ruler on the throne. One was imprisoned—and freed; the other was executed.

Margaret's first husband was Henry Dudley,¹ youngest of the five Dudley brothers, of whom the brightest star was Robert, Earl of Leicester. All the brothers were imprisoned in the Tower after their father's abortive attempt to put Lady Jane Grey on the throne in place of "Bloody" Mary. Guildford Dudley lost his head; Henry was released before the others on account of his youth. He was still a young man when he was killed in the French wars.

For her second husband Margaret married Thomas Howard,² fourth Duke of Norfolk. She bore him five children before she died, aged twenty-three. Norfolk was then twenty-seven. Elizabeth had appointed him one of the commissioners to inquire into the charges made by the Scots against their Queen Mary. They soon began scheming together—and playing with fire. Whether they were in love or not was another matter. Both of them were old hands at intrigue, at love-making, and at playing for high stakes. Elizabeth had them under her eye, and she warned Howard "to be careful on what pillow he laid his head." Norfolk did not heed the warning, however, and he was sent to the Tower. He was released after promising to have nothing more to do with Mary, but temptation proved too strong. Letters between the two were again intercepted, and this time Elizabeth could not be content with a mere warning. She chopped off his head.

The present Audley End was built between 1603 and 1616 by Thomas Howard, first Earl of Suffolk—the son of Margaret Audley and Thomas Howard—at fabulous cost. This was the house where his daughter, young Frances Howard, grew up, and

¹ See Chapter III.

² See Chapter III, under Arundel.

where she spent much of her married life, flatly refusing to live with her young husband at his Staffordshire home, CHARTLEY.¹ Young Essex was not an unattractive man, but Frances hated him with an implacable hatred—all the more because she was violently in love with the King's worthless and powerful favourite, Robert Carr.

Carr was tall, good-looking, with an arrogant charm, and with enough wit to realize that some one else must supply the brain. That some one else was Sir Thomas Overbury, a squire's son from Compton-Scorpion, near Stratford-on-Avon—a man "of dark ability."

Carr had literally been thrown into the King's favour. Taking part in a tournament, he gave a fine display of horsemanship before being thrown, breaking his leg. James found good-looking young men irresistible, and Carr, having made an excellent entrance into the King's graces, was cosseted, fussed over, and generally spoilt.

It was not long before he became Viscount Rochester.

And always in the background, telling him what to say, and when to say it, was the shrewd, wily, and ambitious Thomas Overbury.

Frances, a staunch believer in witchcraft and spells, purchased love-philtres to bring Rochester to bed, and soon made no secret of her intention to marry him. In the meantime she lost no time in becoming his mistress. Overbury opposed any suggestion of a divorce from Essex, for he knew that once Rochester and Frances were married his influence over the favourite would vanish. Rochester would then have the whole of the powerful Howards behind him, and would have no need of a squire's son from the country. He had encouraged the liaison between Rochester and Frances to the utmost, even writing Rochester's love-letters for him. He knew, as all the Court knew, that Frances was Rochester's mistress; but he drew the line at their marriage. That could result only in his ruin.

Frances, furious at Overbury's opposition, determined to liquidate him. She offered one of her friends £1000 to stage a fight and kill Overbury, but the friend refused, saying he "would play the hangman for nobody." That only prolonged Overbury's life. It did not save it.

Rochester double-crossed his former friend with treacherous villainy. When the King (who was jealous of Overbury) offered

¹ See Chapter V.

him a post overseas Rochester advised Overbury to refuse, and then told the King that his refusal amounted to treason. The King agreed. Overbury was thrown into the Tower,¹ and Rochester planned to keep him there till the divorce went through.

Frances had won the first round. Once Overbury was committed to the Tower he had no chance. From the moment of his committal Frances plied her unfortunate enemy with poison, in all sorts of forms, ranging from white arsenic, mercury, spiders, and cantharides to powdered diamonds and hemlock. She had no difficulty in securing an unending supply of poisons from various 'witches' and shady apothecaries, including one infamous red-bearded creature named Franklin. She sent him three angels to supply a poison which would ensure a lingering death—a poison that "should lie in his body a certain time, wherewith he might languish away little and by little." (An angel was a gold coin bearing the figure of Archangel Michael. Its value ranged from 6s. 8d. to 10s.)

Meanwhile Rochester, hand-in-glove with his mistress, kept promising to secure Overbury's release, but time after time he put off the distracted man with one unlikely excuse after another. Overbury, by now seriously ill, was heartbroken by his "friend's" seeming failures. Rochester, to make the way clearer still, had the Lieutenant of the Tower removed and replaced by one of his own nominees. This man saw to it that Overbury was allowed no relative to see him, nor servant to attend him.

Meanwhile divorce proceedings were begun, with encouragement from the same King who had taken so much interest in young Essex, out of regard, he said, for the memory of the Earl's father! James lost no time in appointing a commission to try the case—spurred on by a timely gift of £25,000 from Rochester.

Frances alleged that her marriage with Essex had never been consummated, and when the court demanded that Frances be examined the King substituted an undoubted virgin. Essex aided the farce by being willing to admit impotency—anything to rid himself of his witch-wife. The day before the verdict was known Sir Thomas Overbury died in agony in the Tower. He was buried in such haste and in such profound secrecy (lest anyone should see his wasted body) that public opinion hardened against Rochester and Frances.

Shortly before the divorce a Mrs Mary Wood was tried at Norwich on various charges, including cozening and palmistry. She

¹See Chapter IX.

aid in her testimony that she had been given a diamond ring and money by Frances, with a promise of £1000 more if she were successful in poisoning the Earl. She also supplied the Countess with a charm to enable her to bear a child.

Frances was granted her divorce on the grounds that Essex was incapacitated by witchcraft from consummating the marriage. The trial was the most sensational nullity case ever heard in an English court.

It is not surprising, after this treatment by James, that Essex felt strong hostility to the Court. During the Civil War he was a general in the Cromwellian army, defeating Charles at the first great battle, the Battle of Edgehill,¹ near Kineton, in Warwickshire.

But long before that—almost immediately after the divorce—Rochester (now the Earl of Somerset) and Frances were married at colossal expense and in great splendour, the bride continuing her fiction of virginity by wearing her beautiful hair flowing over her silver gown—a fashion permitted only to maidens. James, with kind consideration, returned some of Rochester's timely gift of £25,000 by loading the bride (now twenty years old) with £10,000 worth of jewels.

By this time a new favourite was growing up at Court, the impoverished young George Villiers² (afterwards first Duke of Buckingham), whom a group of courtiers were backing with clothes and money in an attempt to oust Somerset. Villiers and Somerset split the Court into two rival factions, and as Somerset's power waned public loathing and criticism grew. Finally, rumours of Sir Thomas Overbury's unnatural death grew so strong that even James was forced to take notice, and he instructed Sir Edward Coke to make inquiries. The new young rival was already proving a power in the land, and it was not long before Sir Edward was realizing the advantages of marrying his unfortunate little daughter (another Frances) to George Villiers' elder brother. Coke's need for powerful connexions near the King's ear was not apparent till he over-reached himself in his efforts to secure the conviction of the Earl and Countess of Somerset for the murder of Overbury. On the King's insistence he was forced to retire from the case, though not before he had managed to send some of the smaller fry to the scaffold, including Franklin, the red-bearded apothecary of unsavoury reputation.

¹ See Chapter VII, under Neighbouring Pleasures.

² See Chapter I.

Coke had to hand over his papers to his old enemy and rival, Sir Francis Bacon, now Attorney-General.

Frances, Countess of Somerset, confessed to her share of the murder. She and her husband were both found guilty. James saved their lives, but they were sent to live at ROTHERFIELD GREYS, near Henley-on-Thames. By this time they were no longer on speaking terms, which must have made their virtual imprisonment even more of a trial to the owner of the castle—their gaoler, William Knollys, Earl of Banbury (brother of the Lettice Knollys who had married Leicester, and therefore uncle of the second Earl of Essex). He was probably chosen as the Somersets' gaoler because his wife (not too estimable a character herself) was Frances' elder sister, Elizabeth. He guarded them unwillingly for two years.

After that they moved to CHISWICK HOUSE, near London, where the Countess later died of cancer. The charm which the fortune-teller and cozenor of Norwich had given her had worked well, and she and the Earl had one child, Lady Anne Carr, born during her mother's imprisonment in the Tower.

Anne's father was a king's discarded favourite, her mother a wanton murderess, but Anne was not only beautiful: she was a girl of charm and character as well. She had been brought up in ignorance of her parents' reputation and behaviour, and is said to have swooned to the ground when she learnt their evil story for the first time—from a pamphlet which she had come across by accident.

The Earl and Countess had been saved from the scaffold only through the intervention of the King, so it was not surprising that the Earl of Bedford objected when Anne wanted to marry his son William Russell, of BEDFORD HOUSE, Chiswick Mall, London. Anne and he were very much in love, and Somerset, decent in this particular, determined to purchase his daughter's happiness if that were the only way to achieve it. He sold Chiswick House and all his jewels and plate to provide a dowry of £12,000. The Bedfords changed their mind, and the marriage took place. It was a successful marriage, the Bedford family growing to love Anne as much as did her husband. But Anne lived to see her son Lord William Russell beheaded in 1683 for taking part in the Rye House Plot against Charles II—the same King who afterwards bought her old home of Chiswick House as a present for the Duke of Monmouth.¹

¹ See Chapters VII and IX.

Bess of Hardwick's grandson, the first Duke of Devonshire (the builder of CHATSWORTH*¹ as it stands to-day) offered to change clothes with Lord William to give him a chance to escape. The offer was not accepted. It would only have meant that Devonshire's head would have fallen instead of Lord William's.

The Rye House Plot planned the assassination of King Charles II and the Duke of York as they passed the RYE HOUSE (now a desolate ruin), near Hoddesdon, on their way back from the races at Newmarket. Men were to hide themselves behind a fence and in an ivy-covered gateway to shoot the royal brothers when, as usual, they outdistanced their guards. If the carriage passed the ambush safely a horse and cart waiting in a side-lane was to block the road till all were killed. The Plot failed because Newmarket was almost destroyed by a fire started by a careless groom while the King and his brother were there, and they returned to London some days earlier than intended.

The Duke of Bedford offered £1000 through Charles's mistress, Louise de Kéroualle, the Duchess of Portsmouth, if Lord William Russell's life were spared, but Charles would have none of it, saying with characteristic point that if he did not take Russell's life Russell would surely take his.

He was executed amid the general dismay of the people, his execution being followed by that of several other conspirators, including another of the remarkable Sidney family, Algernon.

Algernon Sidney, like his more illustrious uncle Sir Philip, was born at PENSURST,* in Kent, the second son of the Robert Sidney who inherited the title of Earl of Leicester from *his* uncle Robert Dudley. Like most of the Rye House Plot conspirators, Algernon Sidney held Parliamentary sympathies in the Civil War, during which he had served as a lieutenant-colonel. On the Restoration he travelled extensively on the Continent, being kept very short of money by his father. (His mother was Dorothy Percy, daughter of the sister of Elizabeth's Earl of Essex, and of Henry Percy,² ninth Earl of Northumberland, who spent sixteen years in the Tower.) He was not allowed to return to England till his father's death, and it was then, when he was held up by the slowness of legal business concerning the estate, that he became involved in the intrigue which took him to the scaffold. Sidney was a man of learning and wide interests, having devoted himself, while living on the Continent, to the study of birds, books, and trees. He was also a man of courage and eloquence, but neither his courage nor

¹ See Chapters V and IX.

² See Chapters III, IV, and V.

eloquence availed him when defending himself against a packed court, and against the perjured evidence of Lord Howard of Escrick, who turned King's evidence to save his own skin.

Algernon Sidney was executed shortly after Lord William Russell, and buried at Penshurst.

Although Charles II always acknowledged the Duke of Monmouth as his son, and loved him dearly, many people regarded Robert Sidney as his father. Algernon told the Duke of York (later James II) that when he was in London with Cromwell's army he had agreed to pay Monmouth's mother, Lucy Walters (or Barlow), fifty broad pieces, but he had been ordered to rejoin his regiment unexpectedly, and so missed his bargain. His brother Robert had secured the prize, temporarily, but shortly afterwards she captivated Charles, Lucy being, according to the diarist John Evelyn (who had often seen her in Paris), "a beautiful strumpet."

Monmouth became "the darling of his father and the ladies, being extremely handsome and adroit; an excellent souldier and dancer. . . . He was a lovely person." The "father" referred to here was Charles II.

SINCE THEN

The mansion of AUDLEY END,* near Saffron Walden, is now owned by the Ministry of Works, and is open to the public several times a week between April and October.

James Howard, the third Earl of Suffolk (a nephew of Frances, Countess of Somerset), sold the mansion to King Charles II, but a few months before Charles returned to England the house was evidently "open to the public" to some extent, for Pepys records a visit to Audley End in February 1660. He and his companions went

on foot through the park, and so to the house, where the house-keeper shewed us all the house, in which the stateliness of the ceilings, chimney-pieces, and form of the whole was exceedingly worth seeing. He took us into the cellar, where we drank most admirable drink, a health to the King. Here I played on my flageolette, there being an excellent echo.

Pepys made a second visit to the mansion seven years later. By then he was more experienced, more sophisticated, and less enthralled with the mansion:

The house, indeed, do appear very fine, but not so fine as it hath

heretofore to me. . . . only the gallery is good, and above all things the cellars, where we went down and drank much of good liquors. And indeed the cellars are fine; and here my wife and I did sing to my great content.

Pepys is intimately connected with Audley End. His books are at Magdalene College, Cambridge, the college refounded by Audley, and his diary was first edited by Richard Neville, the third Lord Braybrooke, one of the later owners of Audley End, who died in 1858, and was the ancestor of the last private owners of the mansion.

Its story is fully and entertainingly told in a book entitled *Audley End*, by William Addison.

Even though Pepys was disappointed in Audley End at his second inspection, King Charles considered the mansion and its park, orchards, gardens, stables, and water-mills a very fit place for a king.

The third Earl, after selling Audley End to the King, was appointed "Keeper of the King's House at Audley End"—so he made a good bargain, selling his house and yet enjoying it. His second wife was Barbara Villiers, aunt of the King's most notorious mistress.

In 1670 Queen Katherine of Braganza, with pretty Frances Stuart (with whom Charles used to flirt so outrageously), and the Duchess of Buckingham (whose husband used to build card-houses to amuse the vapid little creature) were staying at Audley End. One day the three of them "had a frolick to disguise themselves like country lasses, in red petticoats, wastcotes, &c., and so goe see the Faire." They patronized the booths, the Queen buying "yellow stockings," and one of her attendants "a paire of gloves sticht with blew," but they all looked so theatrical and their way of speaking was so uncountrified that they were soon recognized—and their fun spoilt. In desperation they remounted and set off again for Audley End. "But as many of the Faire as had horses got up with their wives, children, swete-harts, or neighbours behind them, to get as much gape as they could," and followed them home. "Thus, by ill conduct, was a merrie frolick turned into a pennance."

Charles did not spend much time at Audley End, however, for he restored Windsor Castle about this time, and stayed there in preference. In any case, he lost much of his interest in Audley End—and Newmarket—after the Rye House Plot, but one of his daughters, Charlotte, married into the Howard family.

William III handed the mansion back to the fifth Earl of Suffolk, but the house was by then falling into decay. The fifth Earl was already an elderly man when he regained possession of the house, and he was more interested in cock-fighting and horse-racing than in trying to

restore his family's once magnificent mansion. But his successors did much restoration and rebuilding at tremendous cost, and the present Audley End is largely an eighteenth-century building.

Henry Neville, seventh Lord Braybrooke, died in 1941. His two sons were both killed in the War, and the heavy death duties left the ninth Lord Braybrooke no alternative but to part with the mansion.

There is a pleasantly romantic story connected with the Russells of BEDFORD HOUSE, which is still standing (and occupied) at Chiswick Mall, and linking it with the beautiful old Tudor mansion of WOLFETON HOUSE, near Dorchester, in Dorset.

During Henry VII's reign Wolfeton House belonged to Sir Thomas Trenchard, and in 1506 the most famous event connected with Wolfeton, and the one which linked it with the Russells, took place.

In January that year the Archduke of Austria and his wife, the mad Joanna of Castile (whom Henry VII had once thought of marrying), were caught in a storm in the Channel while on their way to Spain. After a severe buffeting which nearly wrecked them the royal ship managed to make safe anchorage at Portland. There they were met by Sir Thomas Trenchard, who took them to Wolfeton House, where he entertained them for several days while Henry was notified of the sudden arrival in England of the royal visitors.

Sir Thomas, finding the language difficulty a real problem, asked young John Russell, who lived near Bridport, to go and help him out. Russell had travelled on the Continent, and made himself so useful to Philip and Joanna that when the King invited them to Windsor he accompanied them. He made so good an impression on Henry that the King made him a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber. Later he became Baron Russell of Chenies, in Buckinghamshire, Lord Admiral of England and Ireland, and Lord Privy Seal—a good reward springing from his fluency in Spanish.

In Edward VI's reign Russell became Earl of Bedford, and he was the man who conducted Philip of Spain, the grandson of his benefactor, to England for his marriage to Queen Mary.

The Russell family were friends of Sir Philip Sidney,¹ and he gave his best suit of gilt armour to one of them. He must often have visited them at Bedford House and at their other home, Corney House (pulled down in 1832), for his mother lived in retirement in Chiswick after she had lost her looks when nursing Queen Elizabeth through an attack of smallpox.

Another of the Russell family, Sir Francis Russell, stood as godfather

¹ See Chapter V.

and gave his name to a small boy who grew up to typify the whole splendour of the Elizabethan Age—Sir Francis Drake.¹

Wolfeton House was once one of the finest Tudor buildings in Dorset, and, though it has been considerably altered at various times, and is now divided into flats, it is still a remarkable building, with the gatehouse with its two drum towers, its great mullioned windows, and its utterly delightful Tudor carvings. They include elaborate designs of the Signs of the Zodiac, animal caricatures in human costumes, knights on horseback, and a king and queen standing on the twin towers of a castle—perhaps an allusion to the visit of the Archduke Philip and the mad Joanna. Joanna, who visited the Court of Henry VII in 1506, is thought to have inspired the celebrated nursery song "I had a little nut-tree."

Francis Drake was born at CROWNDAL, near Tavistock, in Devon, about 1543. The house where he was born has been demolished, but the site is marked with a plaque. His father, Edmund, had been a sailor, but he gave up the sea and became a yeoman farmer, with a large family, of which Francis was the eldest. The Russells were his landlords, having become great landowners when they bought monastery property at the Dissolution.

The Drakes were staunch Protestants, and during the Roman Catholic revolt in 1549 they were so roughly handled that Edmund and his wife and family of small children had to flee without waiting to collect any of their possessions. They moved to Gillingham in Kent, to live on board an old hulk. Edmund Drake worked among—and preached to—sailors and shipwrights, so young Francis had sea in his blood and in his upbringing. When he was fourteen he was apprenticed to a sea-captain trading in the Channel.

But, though he was born near Tavistock and brought up at Gillingham, Drake belongs to PLYMOUTH. It was at Plymouth Hoe that he was playing his famous game of bowls when the Armada hove in sight, and only eleven miles away stands BUCKLAND ABBEY,* which he purchased with his share of the great treasure he brought back from the adventure of the *Golden Hind*.

Elizabeth gave him the lovely Tudor house of Gayhurst,² in Buckinghamshire, as a reward for his voyage round the world. But perhaps a home so far inland did not appeal to him. He sold it the following day, and it afterwards became one of the plotting centres for the Gunpowder Plotters.

¹ See Chapter VIII.

² See Chapter IV.

Like many another adventurer, Drake became a legend in his own lifetime, and a legend to be treated with great respect in the flesh! People said that he had a mirror in which he could see what ships were doing a thousand miles away. Others swore that once as he sat idly whittling sticks on Devil's Point the shavings turned into full-rigged ships as they touched the sea.

And the story of Drake's Drum is probably the most famous and blood-stirring (as against blood-chilling) supernatural story in England.

The Drum is supposed to be the one Drake took round the world with him aboard the *Pelican*. As the great sailor lay dying he declared that whenever England was in danger the Drum would sound, and he would return to fight.

Well-authenticated stories tell how the Drum was heard at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. It was heard again as the ships of the German High Seas Fleet appeared through the mist to surrender at Scapa Flow. The roll of the Drum continued as the Grand Fleet closed round the German ships, and it did not cease till the ships had dropped anchor. Many people heard the rolling of the Drum. None of them could find a satisfactory explanation.

Drake shares with King Arthur¹ the legend of the watchful sleep. They are heroes who will come again when their country needs them most. Drake makes periodical visits from time to time—just to keep his hand in, perhaps. He has been seen riding across Dartmoor with a pack of ghostly hounds whose cry is so terrible that any dog hearing it dies on the spot! He has also been seen driving a hearse with headless horses.

Buckland Abbey, six miles from Drake's birthplace, is now a Drake and naval museum, with his Drum in the place of honour.

The fine old Abbey was given by Henry VIII to Sir Richard Grenville, whose famous grandson, another Sir Richard Grenville, of the *Revenge*, added the fine ceiling. When he did not return from the Azores Sir Francis Drake bought the Abbey, and his arms are shown in plaster in a room on the top storey.

In 1948 the National Trust acquired the Abbey, through the help of Viscount Astor, Captain A. Rodd, and the Pilgrim Trust. It is open to the public most days.

From the quay below Plymouth Hoe the *Mayflower* and the Pilgrim Fathers set sail for the New World in 1620. All the 162 passengers and the crew of 28 are commemorated in the Mayflower Stone, set into the cobbles, and by a bronze memorial erected on the Barbican at Plymouth.

¹ See Chapter III, under Neighbouring Pleasures.

Many years later the little ship *Tory* set sail from Plymouth with the settlers who founded New Plymouth, in New Zealand.

Lady Astor,¹ formerly Nancy Langhorne of Virginia, the first woman to sit in the House of Commons, was for twenty-five years Member for Plymouth.

Drake and his strange "possessed" Drum are in good company in Devon, for in Devonshire in 1855 occurred one of the most tantalizingly mysterious "ghostly" visitations that has ever taken place in England.

This visitation was reported in *The Times* of February 16, 1855, and fully written up in *The Illustrated London News* of February 24, 1855.

The mysterious visitor left equally mysterious footmarks

upon the snow during the night of Thursday, the 8th . . . in the county of Devon, extending over a tract of country of thirty or forty miles on both sides of the River Exe, or probably more. . . . The marks which appeared on the snow . . . to all appearances were the perfect impression of a donkey's hoof—the length 4 inches by $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches; but instead of progressing as that animal would have done (or, indeed, as any other would have done) feet right and left, it appeared that foot had followed foot in *single line*; the distance from each tread being eight inches, or rather more.

The visitor's tracks passed

over the roofs of houses, and hayricks, and very high walls (one fourteen feet), without displacing the snow on either side or altering the distance between the feet, and passing on as if the wall had not been any impediment. When we consider the distance that must have been gone over to have left these marks . . . the actual progress must have exceeded a hundred miles.

No known animal could have traversed this extent of country in one night, beside having to cross an estuary of the sea two miles broad. Neither does any known animal walk in a *line of single* footsteps, not even man. Birds could not have left these marks, as no bird's foot leaves the impression of a hoof. . . . Besides, the most singular circumstance connected with the track was that the mark removed the snow, wherever it appeared, clear, as if cut with a diamond or branded with a hot iron.

Many ingenious attempts were made to explain the strange visitor, who had left his marks so firmly on both sides of the river Exe. The explanations included a stray swan, an otter, a great bustard, a catamountain, and even a kangaroo escaped from a private menagerie at Sidmouth. But by far the most popular explanation was that supplied

¹ See Chapter I, under Cliveden.

by villagers, who "refused to go out after sunset on conviction it was the Devil's walk, and none other."

The old Jacobean CHISWICK HOUSE has now quite disappeared. Ownership of the house changed rapidly, perhaps because of the evil memories left behind by the Countess of Somerset, who died there "in misery and disgrace."

In the eighteenth century Richard Boyle, third Earl of Burlington, retired to Chiswick House. After altering Burlington House in Piccadilly (now the Royal Academy of Arts) he pulled down a great deal of Chiswick House, and built a Palladian villa. Although some unkind critic remarked that the villa was "too small to live in and too large to hang on a watchchain," Burlington designed it not as a dwelling, but as a kind of art gallery to display his many works of art, including pictures by Holbein, Rembrandt, Van Dyck, and Titian.

On Burlington's death Chiswick House was inherited by his daughter Charlotte, who married the fourth Duke of Devonshire. Their daughter-in-law added two wings to the old building. In one wing Charles James Fox died in 1806. In the other wing another statesman, George Canning, died in 1827.

Old Chiswick House knew royalty well, for Charles II bought the manor for the Duke of Monmouth. But the newer house knew royalty more widely and more intimately. Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort visited there; so did Tsar Nicholas; and the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) lived there during his family's childhood.

In May 1939 Chiswick House was acquired for the public, and it was opened that same year by the late Duke of Kent.

A great deal of reconstruction work is now being carried out at Chiswick House by the Ministry of Works, and, though the gardens are open to the public the House itself will not be for some years to come.

NEIGHBOURING PLEASURES

Newmarket and Audley End were only two of Charles II's out-of-London interests.

At Newmarket Charles had rebuilt the hunting-lodge built by James I, which had fallen into disrepair during the Commonwealth. Although Charles left Newmarket hastily after the town caught fire in 1683 (and thereby missed being assassinated in the Rye House Plot), the race meetings there have been under royal patronage ever since his reign. If Charles developed a distaste for Newmarket after the discovery of the

Plot he must often have remembered with pleasure how very merry indeed he once made himself at Euston, the Suffolk home of Henry Bennet,¹ Earl of Arlington.

It was the magnificent woodlands surrounding Euston that won Arlington's great admiration and desire, and he spent an enormous amount of money on building a very "noble pile," as it was described by the diarist John Evelyn, whom Arlington consulted about his great plantations of elms, firs, limes, and other great trees.

All this gave Evelyn great pleasure, but there were other matters concerning Arlington—and Euston—on which he looked askance.

Arlington was an ambitious man who made the mistake of backing the wrong aspirant to royal favouritism. When the Duke of Buckingham played up to Frances Stuart, Charles II's serious interest of the moment, Arlington encouraged the Duchess of Mazarin² in the hopes that he could oust Buckingham, Frances Stuart, and Louise de Kéroualle, another of Charles's mistresses, at one and the same time.

But Buckingham always had the edge on Arlington. Not only had he known Charles from boyhood, but he had a wicked gift of mimicry which he used shamelessly to turn the laugh against Arlington. Besides, Frances Stuart was very desirable; the Duchess of Mazarin was not.

Frances Stuart³ had come to England as a protégée of the King's sister, "Minette," and become a maid-of-honour to his Queen, Katherine of Braganza. Frances dazzled the King with her beauty, if not with her wit, for, declared one man, "It would be difficult to imagine less brain combined with more beauty." But the infatuated Charles adored her and pursued her, and declared she had the most beautiful legs in England. Though Frances won Charles's (temporary) heart, she never achieved the throne, as some hinted she desired. But she achieved immortality, for she was the original of the Britannia on British coins.

The Mazarin was quite another kettle of fish. She was a voluptuous Italian beauty who had scandalized Europe by touring the Continent with lovers of both sexes and a menagerie of dogs, monkeys, and birds. When she arrived in London to stay with Arlington at GORING HOUSE⁴ (where Buckingham Palace now stands) she had a little black boy in her entourage as well. But for all her beauty and eccentricities Hortense Mazarin never progressed far with Charles. Perhaps her eccentricities outweighed her beauty and talents.

But if Arlington scored no success in the scheming background of the Court he achieved one of his chief ambitions when he married his little daughter, Isabella, to one of Charles's sons. Charles, of course,

¹ See Chapter IX.

² Ibid.

³ See Chapter I.

⁴ See Chapter IX.

was only too glad to marry one of his large family to an heiress of such wealth.

Isabella was only five when she was first married to the nine-year-old Henry Fitz Roy¹ (later the Duke of Grafton), Charles's second son by Barbara Castlemaine. The children were married again eight years later.

John Evelyn was present at both weddings, and disapproved both times. The second time he wrote, on November 6, 1679:

Was this evening at the remarriage of the Duchess of Grafton to the Duke (his Majesty's natural sonn) she being now twelve years old. The ceremonie was performed by the Bishop of Rochester, his Majesty being present. I confesse I could give her little joy, and so I plainly told her, but she said the King would have it so, and there was no going back. This sweetest, hopefulest, most beautiful child, and most virtuous too, was sacrific'd to a boy that had been rudely bred, without any thing to encourage them but his Majesty's pleasure.

In spite of Evelyn's ungracious opinion of young Grafton, he was a capable young man, probably the most capable of all Charles's family. He had a taste for adventure—even for unorthodox adventure—and a real aptitude for fighting, and the sea.

There was no love lost, however, between his mother and his mother-in-law. Only a few months after the small boy was married for the first time the Earl and Countess of Arlington were Charles's hosts at Euston, and Barbara Castlemaine heard the scandalous rumours as soon as any, and with more vituperative jealousy than most. What she heard was that the Countess of Arlington had helped to stage a burlesque "marriage" between Louise de Kéroualle, a lovely dark French girl, and Charles, with all the attendant, immodest ceremonies of the time. John Evelyn, who was staying at Euston at the time, wrote:

It was universally reported that the fair lady . . . was bedded one of these nights, and the stocking flung, after the manner of a married bride; I acknowledge she was for the most part in her undress all day, and that there was fondness and toying with the young wanton; nay, it was said I was at the former ceremony; but it is utterly false.

Louise de Kéroualle's son was born nine months later.

The Euston built by Arlington, and so admired by Evelyn, with its stables for thirty horses and rooms for a hundred servants, was almost totally destroyed by fire in 1902.

¹ See Chapter IV and Chapter IX.

But the old house, and the one built to replace it, has been owned by the descendants of Charles II's son and his Duchess ever since. Henry was killed by musket-shot at the siege of Cork when still a young man, but he left a son, Charles, born in 1683.

Though Henry was only young when he was killed, he had led an adventurous—and at times a wild—life. His wildness was kept in check while Charles was alive, but not long after the King's death Henry was involved in two duels, as well as in the naughty escapade concerning his sister-in-law, Catherine Lucy.¹

In his first duel Henry killed Jack Talbot, son of the Earl of Shrewsbury,² who had been killed by the Duke of Buckingham. In his second Henry killed Mr Stanley, brother of the Earl of Derby. Both he and Talbot had been saying that Henry's scandalous mother, Barbara Castlemaine, had had a child by Cardonell Goodman, an actor and adventurer, and originally a page of the backstairs to Charles.

Long after Charles's death, when Barbara turned her home into a gaming-house before retiring to Walpole House, in Chiswick, she appointed Cardonell Goodman her croupier.

Charles Fitz Roy, the second Duke of Grafton, was only six when his mother, then twenty-three, was left a widow. She was a beautiful and lovable girl, and married again. Charles became Lord Chamberlain under both George I and George II. He was a brilliant man with a wise understanding of men's foibles, but he drank too much—and slept too much! Nevertheless he had a proper pride, as became the grandson of a king, and he felt himself superior to the unattractive Georges. There were a number of royal bastards and their children at Court. One day the Prince of Wales, later George II, muttered irritably to Grafton's uncle, George, Duke of Northumberland, "One can't move here for bastards!" Northumberland, as touchy as Grafton on the subject, replied, "Sir, my father was as great a king as yours, and as for our mothers, the less we say about them the better."

As far as mothers went, the Prince of Wales scored heavily there. Whereas Northumberland's mother, Barbara Castlemaine, had countless lovers, the Prince of Wales's mother had only one—Philip Christopher von Königsmarck.³

It was at WALPOLE HOUSE, not far from Chiswick House, that Barbara Castlemaine spent the last years of her⁴ life, living with her grandson, Charles Hamilton.⁴ He was the son of her daughter Barbara by the Duke of Hamilton, who was killed in a duel by the bad Lord Mohun. Barbara, indomitable to the end, died of dropsy at Walpole

¹ See Chapter IV, under Charlecote.

² See Chapter I.

³ See Chapter II.

⁴ See Chapter I.

House, which she is said now to haunt. The tap-tap of her heels has been heard on the shallow stairs, and she had been seen wringing her hands by the tall windows of the drawing-room.

Long after the Castlemaine's day Walpole House was a school, attended for a time by a nervous, unhappy little boy from India—William Makepeace Thackeray. Thackeray himself immortalized the house by making it the setting for Miss Pinkerton's Academy, attended by Becky Sharp.

KNOLE,* the home of the Sackvilles for three hundred years, was for a time the property of Elizabeth's old playmate and favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. But he gave it up, whereupon Elizabeth gave it to her cousin Thomas Sackville, grandson of a Boleyn. His father, Sir Richard, was a man of such immense wealth that he was known as "Sir Richard Fillsack," and Thomas was only twenty-nine when he inherited the vast wealth and estates.

Thomas, later created Earl of Dorset, spent an enormous amount of money on Knole, importing workmen from Italy, and maintaining there a private orchestra of ten players. Thomas held many State appointments under Elizabeth and James. He was given the painful task of telling Mary Queen of Scots that she was to be executed—a task he carried out with so much delicacy and compassion that Mary gave him a painted triptych and carved wooden figure, *The Procession to Calvary*, now in the Chapel at Knole.

It was Thomas's son Robert, second Earl of Dorset, who married Margaret Howard, the daughter of Margaret Audley, of Audley End, and the fourth Duke of Norfolk. She died in childbirth.

The Sackvilles were never as powerful, for they were never as politically interfering, as the Howards, but most of them possessed a tremendous gift for enjoyment, and for friendship. The outstanding members of the family—Charles, the sixth Earl, his son Lionel, the first Duke, and Lionel's grandson John—were all men who typified their period, Charles and John particularly living life in capital letters.

Charles was perhaps the most interesting of them all. He was certainly the most spectacular—a flamboyant, brilliant libertine, the rakish and witty drinking companion of King Charles II, and a previous enjoyer of Nell Gwynn's¹ charms. When Nell was about sixteen Charles Sackville, whom Nell called "her Charles I," gave her £100 a year, and together they kept "merry house" at Epsom. Nell's "Charles II" was the actor Charles Hart, a grandnephew of Shakespeare, and one of the *matinée* idols of Drury Lane. Her "Charles III"

¹ See Chapter I.

was King Charles, and when she became his mistress she passed out of the life of Charles Sackville.

Charles Sackville was one of the gayest libertines of the Restoration, but he was a lively patron and friend of such men as Dryden, Pope, and William Penn, the Quaker,¹ as well as being the terror of the Town Watch. His liking for Charles II was matched by his dislike of James II, and he took an active part in the accession of William III. He was married three times, the last time in old age to a woman called Anne Roche, who kept him "in a sort of captivity" at Bath. He died, a semi-imbecile, "an ancient and mouldy bird of Paradise."²

Like the rapsallion Charles Sackville, his son Lionel knew royalty well. King William was a silent, glum man, but even he had his moments of charm, and there is a pleasant story of how he played in the King's Gallery at Kensington Palace with Lionel when he was still little Lord Buckhurst. The King pulled the little boy along the Gallery to a room where the Queen was taking tea with the child's grandmother. By the time they reached the room the King was exhausted with an attack of asthma, and the horrified grandmother was stopped from punishing Lionel only on the intervention of the gasping King.

Many years later, when he had become the first Duke of Dorset, Lionel was sent to Hanover on Queen Anne's death to conduct the new King George I to England—and on his death Lionel had to announce his succession to George II, who refused to believe a word of it.

Lionel was amiable rather than brilliant, but, like his father, he was a patron of the arts. Peg Woffington was his favourite.

His grandson John, the third Duke, was another Sackville of great energy and splendour, and, though he possessed no particular talents, he enjoyed a colourful life with a Chinese page-boy, a beautiful Italian mistress, Gianette Baccelli, a dancer who had scandalized Paris, and several other lovers, including, perhaps, Marie Antoinette herself. Though of no particular talents, John nevertheless became Ambassador to France, and he was in Paris at the outbreak of the Revolution. Even he, used as he was to wealth, was aghast at the extravagance of the French Court. The cost of moving the French Court from Fontainebleau to Versailles he described as "incredible. The duc de Polignac told me he had given orders for 2115 horses for this service . . ."

On his return to England Knole became one of the favourite rendezvous for French nobles who had escaped the guillotine.

John, unfortunately, became too much of a reformed character when he married, and there is no more talk of his Bohemian troupe of singers,

¹ See Chapter III, under Arundel.

² See *Knole and the Sackvilles*, by V. Sackville-West.

actors, and changing mistresses. He married the dignified and wealthy Arabella Cope, and he became both parsimonious and quarrelsome. His three children were brought up with great severity. The son died young, and Knole eventually became the property of the younger sister, Elizabeth. She married George West, fifth Earl de la Warr, and their children assumed the double surname of Sackville-West.

Knole is one of the most famous country houses in England, partly because of its enormous extent, and partly because of its historical associations. It stands on a hill, a great grey building arranged round seven courtyards (for the days of the week), and is said to contain 52 staircases and 365 rooms.

The building was begun in 1456 by the Archbishop of Canterbury, but Thomas Sackville's Jacobean alterations in Elizabeth's reign greatly transformed the Archbishop's work. Henry VIII owned it at one time, having prised it away from the unwilling Archbishop Cranmer, who tried in vain to keep it for himself.

Knole covers a great acreage, and at one time was almost a self-contained village, with its vast outcrop of stables, brew-houses, piggeries, carpenter's shops, and slaughter-houses. The house contains a magnificent collection of rare furniture, including the famous sofa with the adjustable drop-end, known as the "Knole sofa," tapestries and pictures, and stands surrounded by a lovely park of something like a thousand acres. Herds of fallow and Japanese deer roam round the small hills and valleys. Glass was made in the park during Elizabeth's reign, and it is possible that all the bottle-green glass in the windows in the Tapestry Passage was made there.

Knole and its gardens and eighty acres of parkland was given to the National Trust in 1946 by the fourth Lord Sackville, who, with his family, has a lease of part of the house. Knole Park is open every day—to pedestrians—and the house itself is open several days a week.

About half-way between Audley End and Colchester stands the lovely old Tudor mansion GOSFIELD HALL, which is linked not with English royalty, but with an exiled King and Queen from France—Louis XVIII and his wife.

Gosfield was originally built in the reign of Henry VII, a king who exercised his royal prerogative of prohibiting the building of castles by his subjects. Many substantial mansions, strong enough if need be to stand a good deal of military wear and tear, were consequently built during his reign, and Gosfield was one of them. It has an odd feature. Being only one room deep, there was no communication round the inside except by going through every room. The Hall was extensively

altered during the eighteenth century. It has recently been bought by the Essex County Council to be preserved as a building of great architectural interest.

Louis XVIII was the younger brother of Louis XVI, who, with Marie Antoinette, lost his head during the French Revolution. Louis XVI was a weak king, far more interested in hunting—and in making locks—than in kingship, and he had little understanding of his people's troubles. He went to his death with great courage and dignity, and as soon as he was dead his little son, then eight years old, became titular King of France. He represented a possible rallying-point for the French Royalists, and was kept a close and unhappy prisoner. Though at least forty Pretenders appeared in later years, the little boy probably died in prison when he was about ten. He was succeeded by his uncle Louis XVIII, the exiled King who stayed for two years at Gosfield.

Louis entered Paris as King in 1814, when he was nearly sixty, fat, wearied by adversity, and troubled with gout. He was clear-sighted, and a well-read and witty man, but a sentimentalist too easily influenced by his family, his mistresses, and his favourites. Nevertheless Gosfield village still remembers his stay in England with pride and pleasure.

Louis's host during his stay was Richard Grenville, first Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, who also owned Stowe, in Buckinghamshire, now a Public School. Louis XVIII and members of his family planted trees in the gardens at Stowe in memory of the lavish hospitality he had enjoyed. In fact, the hospitality was so lavish that the Duke was afterwards forced to live abroad for some years to economize.

Not far from Gosfield is the old town of COGGESHALL (pronounced Cogshell), so old that it was almost certainly a Roman settlement. To it belongs a typical English folk-story—the story of the “three wise men.” The villagers were dissatisfied with the position of their church, and, calling on “three wise men” of local fame, asked their advice. The three men debated the problem and decided on immediate action. They flung off their coats, rushed round to the other side of the church, and gave a mighty and concerted heave. After that they went back to pick up their coats, and, finding them gone, took it as proof positive that they had pushed the church over the coats!

In Edward III's reign the monks of the Cistercian Abbey at Coggeshall founded a chantry in their church to pray daily for the King and the rest of the royal family. In return for this attention, the King granted the monks a hogshead of red wine, to be delivered in London by the Royal Gentlemen of the Wine Cellar, every year at Easter.

In the main street in Coggeshall is PAYCOCKE'S HOUSE,* a merchant's richly ornamented house dating from about 1500. It has exceptionally fine panelling and wood-carving. Paycocke's was given to the National Trust by the first Lord Noel-Buxton in 1924, and is open to the public several times a week all the year round.

BIGGLESWADE, well to the west of Audley End, was the scene of an extraordinary discovery in 1824, when some labourers dug up a helmet of exquisite workmanship—and then some human bones. Digging further, and cautiously, they unearthed a shield, and finally the complete skeleton of a gigantic warrior clad in armour and still sitting on the armour-clad skeleton of his horse.

Careful excavation followed this strange discovery, and later several other men were unearthed, all in armour, and all upright. Authorities called in to inspect the dead men considered that they must have been trapped in a pit dug by their enemies.

Some thirty or forty years before this discovery a ploughman dug up a yellow earthenware pot containing three hundred gold coins of the period of Henry VI.

SAFFRON WALDEN and its charming name deserve a word or two. The saffron (or yellow crocus) was regarded during the Middle Ages as possessing great medicinal powers, and a powder made from the petals of a saffron was almost as valuable as the prophylactic powdered horn of a unicorn, selling as high as 33s. for two pounds in 1584.

The prized yellow crocuses are said to have been smuggled out of Spain to England by a returning traveller who had heard of their miraculous properties. The Moors had taken them to Spain from Arabia, but, though the climate is so startlingly different, the saffrons were found to flourish exceedingly in the district around Walden, which became Saffron Walden.

When Charles II visited Audley End in 1666 during the long-drawn-out negotiations for the purchase of the mansion of Audley End the town of Saffron Walden sent him a silver cup valued at £20 and filled with saffron.

There was once a rich priory at Saffron Walden. There is still the ruins of an ancient castle.

Saffron Walden, is one of the towns that Dick Turpin rode through in his fictitious ride to York, for the ride was actually accomplished by another highwayman named John (or William) Nevison, and nicknamed Nicks. Nicks' adventure began on Gad's Hill, Kent, one summer's morning in 1676, when he held up a rider as he came over

the brow of the hill. After robbing his man Nicks set spurs to his own bay mare, and rode on till he caught the ferry. Then on and on to Chelmsford, Dunmow, and Saffron Walden, through Cambridge and Huntingdon, and on to York, where he changed his clothes and challenged the mayor to a game of bowls. He had ridden some 190 miles in fifteen hours. Before this wild adventure the highwayman was known as Nicks. After it he was known as "Swift" Nicks, and his unshakable alibi and his English coolness earned him a well-deserved acquittal. But they never earned him a well-deserved fame, for the story has always been associated with Dick Turpin.

All highwaymen—even the ghostly one of Syderstone—have a certain essence of glamour, but Dick Turpin is one of the least deserving. He began as an apprentice to a butcher, but after stealing a sheep (a capital offence in those days) he joined a gang of deer-stealers and smugglers. He became their leader, but when the gang broke up he took to the highway. His speciality seems to have been tying up farmers' wives while their menfolk were away, and roasting them over the kitchen fire till they revealed where their savings were hidden.

After a while Essex grew too hot to hold Turpin, and he moved on to Yorkshire, where he eventually set up (under an assumed name) as a horse-dealer. He was arrested on a charge of horse-stealing, imprisoned in York Castle, tried, convicted, and hanged in 1739.

Nevison (whose Christian name is given both as John and William) seems to have been a far better type than Turpin, but he too ended on the scaffold.

Nevison was a Yorkshireman, born at Pontefract in 1639. He was a well-behaved boy till he was fourteen, when he stole a silver spoon from his father, who handed him over to his schoolmaster for punishment. In retaliation Nevison stole his father's savings and his master's horse, and set off for London. He enjoyed an adventurous life, saw some soldiering in Flanders, and showed flashes of the whimsical humour fiction always associates with such heroes of the highway. One day when he was himself on the look-out for victims he came up with two distressed travellers who had just been robbed of £40 by three highwaymen. Nevison immediately set spurs to his gallant one-eyed horse and overtook the robbers. He captured one, and as the others rode off shouted after them that he would ransom their companion for whatever was in their pockets. He took all they had, which was a goodly £150, and then, playing the wag, rode back to his acquaintances and, no doubt with suitable flourish, repaid them the £40!

Nevison had one favourite hide-out, an immense hollow oak on Ringston Hill, near Wakefield, but, like most of his ilk, he was captured

at last, and flung into Leicester gaol, where he was heavily fettered and closely guarded. His second last adventure was to escape from the gaol—by pretending he had the Plague. Friends daubed his face with purple paint, one of them gave him a sleeping-draught, and, as none of the attendants would go near him, they were able to pronounce him "dead" and carry him out in a coffin. However, he made the fatal mistake of being recaptured, and this led to his last adventure—on the scaffold in York.

Charles II, who always liked a merry rogue, was greatly interested in Nevison and his famous "alibi" ride. Though he led a violent life, he was never accused of the cruelties so readily performed by the much-lauded Dick Turpin.

Turpin committed murder, arson, and rape, but a halo of romance has grown up with the memory of him and his horse Black Bess, and there are countless place-names honouring this ruffian of the highway, including Turpin's Corner, Meadow, and Oak. He was born in 1706, at his father's alehouse at Hempstead, not far from Saffron Walden, and was widely known all over Essex. A year or so ago a stable was still standing at BUCKHURST HILL, near his operation area of Epping Forest. This stable claimed a close association with Turpin. There was one stall on the ground floor, and another on the first, this one being windowless and leading from a bedroom. When Turpin arrived at the stable he would lead his sweating horse upstairs and bring a fresh horse down—to throw pursuers off the scent.

Epping Forest was a natural hide-out and operational base for highwaymen, deer-stealers, and smugglers.

Even now it is easy enough to lose your way in Epping Forest, and in the days when highwaymen still abounded the few roads were narrow and almost hidden among the great birches, beeches, and other fine trees. Travellers seldom travelled alone, but even in post-chaises they were not necessarily safe. In 1776 two men, dressed as gentlemen and well mounted, asked permission to join a hunt in progress through the Forest. Permission was readily granted. When the hunt was over the two strangers rode off together, held up two carriages at the same time and robbed all the passengers before calling it a day.

The deer-stalkers were men of a very different breed, though cunning and daring, for the forestry laws were strict to the point of cruelty, and cropped ears, hands, and even heads followed a conviction. Very often these men lived right in Epping Forest in huts with pits dug in the floor under a false hearth. The stolen corpses of the deer could be dropped in and hidden in an emergency, and later sold as "black

sausages" to inn-keepers, who naturally asked no questions and were told no lies.

On the other hand, there were a few gentle people who visited the Forest, including Elizabeth Fry, who used to take her children there to pick wild flowers.

But by and large Epping Forest was the haunt of highwaymen, deer-stealers, and smugglers, and honest men were neither welcome nor safe.

Smugglers operating on the Sussex coast dumped and picked up their loot as far inland as Plaistow and Horsham, often working in with Epping Forest confederates, and through them with gangs at PAGLESHAM, Southend, Canvey Island, and other Essex towns. It was a never-ending game of "Cowboys and Indians," played to the death when necessary by fearless, cut-throat smugglers and determined excisemen.

Smuggling began as a regular enterprise in the fourteenth century, and legend says that half the houses along the coast of Sussex and Kent were built on the proceeds. The main goods smuggled into England were tobacco, rum, wines, and spirits. The main product smuggled out was wool. English wool was always in great demand, and at times its export was totally prohibited. But that only encouraged the smugglers. The smaller the supply the greater the demand, and the higher the profits, and for something like three hundred years wool continued to be smuggled out of England in large quantities. Everybody had a hand in the game if they lived along the coast—parson, squire, merchant, farmer, fisherman, and sailor, and their womenfolk as well.

"Owling"—the smuggling of wool—was rampant in the Stuart period, and in Charles II's reign Customs officials put to sea to try to stop the trade. But smuggling was an art that had been handed down from father to son for generations, and the excisemen were always hopelessly outnumbered and usually defeated by the local men, who knew every bay and cave, and had the sympathy of every local resident. With the Restoration—and the lifting of Puritanical restrictions—the market for smuggled luxuries grew overnight, and not only had the worried excisemen to try to prevent the export of wool, but they also had to try to prevent the import of rich Continental silks, French dresses, and tea, as well as the perennial tobacco, rum, wine, and spirits. The whole of the coast right round from Paglesham, and even farther north, to Cornwall was in the business up to the hilt, and special vessels were built for the Channel run, with false bottoms and hollow masts and bowsprits.

The business was naturally concentrated on the South Coast, and at the end of the eighteenth century most towns and villages actually on the sea were building their own fast luggers and cutters. Mevagissey, in Cornwall, had the reputation of building the fastest vessels, and boat-builders there were kept busy with orders from smugglers all along the coast, as far afield as Sussex. All sorts of tricks were resorted to by the smugglers, apart from the hollow masts and false bottoms to their vessels.

Tobacco was sometimes made into a "rope" and covered with rope-yarn, and once at least a mock funeral allowed a coffin full of contraband to come ashore under the very noses of the excisemen.

In 1747 smugglers broke into the Poole Customs House, and, while the excise vessel was held up by the tide, packed all the goods on to packhorses and made off into the night. Often the bands of smugglers numbered a hundred men or more, and wise villagers, when they heard the clatter of horses through the quiet streets, saw nothing, and heard nothing, though perhaps they licked their lips in envy as they thought of the kegs of brandy tied to the saddles.

Paglesham, once the haven of the oyster-dredgers, probably saw as much of the smuggling industry as any port in England. Many of those in the game there made large fortunes, mostly out of wool, but in one year alone the smugglers at Paglesham imported more than 13,400 gallons of Geneva brandy! Nor was a £200 haul of silk at one time anything exceptional. The bales were often stored while awaiting delivery in the hollow trunks of three old pollard elms, known as "The Three Owd Widders," which stood just outside the village. Every marsh farm and every out-of-the-way church was used as a hiding-place for contraband, and there are many stories of smugglers becoming staunch church-goers, because it was advisable to keep an eye on their goods! One man at Canvey Island displayed great imagination. He complained to all and sundry that his house was haunted, and eventually he persuaded the local parson to go along with bell, book, and candle. So did every one else, and when the coast was clear a confederate drove a horse and cart up to the parson's church and took out a hidden store of smuggled brandy.

The ruins of Hadleigh Castle, near Southend, were a favourite haunt of smugglers, who used it as a look-out. With hand-lamps and lanterns they could flash messages both north and south to the Kent coast.

The parson at Canvey Island helped one smuggling enterprise unwittingly, but very often parsons were in the business themselves. In ALFRISTON, for instance, where smuggling was the local industry, one parson feigned illness when he heard that a gang of smugglers, hard

pressed by excise men, had hastily stowed the stolen cargo under the pews of his church.

Alfriston is one of the most charming—and historic—villages in Sussex. Local tradition says that it was at the Star Inn in Alfriston that Alfred burnt the cakes, and, though local tradition may be wrong, he certainly possessed property at Ditchling, a few miles farther inland, and kept horses there.

(Many years later there was a gibbet on Ditchling Common. To carry a splinter from this gibbet was said to be a certain insurance against toothache.)

A building worth seeing at Alfriston (besides the Star and the Smugglers' Inn) is the old, humble PRIESTS' HOUSE,* still with its clay floor and roof timbers blackened by smoke from the hearth. The House was built about 1350, with cambered tie-beams and moulded king-posts. It was the first building acquired by the National Trust, and is open to the public every day.

The Star Inn is probably the oldest inn of its name in England, and, as it once belonged to Battle Abbey, its name probably implies "Star of Bethlehem." Battle Abbey was built on part of the site of the Battle of Hastings, where William the Conqueror defeated Harold. The inn was directly supported by the Abbey for the use of pilgrims, and many on their way to and from Thomas à Becket's tomb at Canterbury spent the night there. It is one of the last of the pilgrims' inns still standing. The Smugglers' Inn is equally interesting, with its secret rooms and countless hidden stairways, and its old shove-halfpenny boards.

Alfriston is also famous for its church, known as the "Cathedral of the Downs." It was built in the form of a crucifix, and is one of the loveliest of the downland churches. Legend says that its shape was determined by the architect when he found four oxen sleeping in the form of a cross on the chosen site.

New Zealanders will be interested to know that slips from apple-trees from Alfriston were sent out in 1880. The slips were stuck into potatoes to keep them moist, and they survived the long journey well enough to establish a variety which is still flourishing in the Dominion.

The story of BATTLE ABBEY* is interwoven with the story of COWDRAY PARK, near Midhurst, for the curse laid on Sir Anthony Browne at Battle affected not him, but his descendants long afterwards, when they had moved to Cowdray.

Sir Anthony was Chief Standard Bearer to Henry VIII, and at the Dissolution of the Monasteries he was given Battle Abbey for his own use. He angered the monks by making revelry while they were at their

devotions, and by despoiling the building to help build a mansion for himself. Finally one monk cried out, "By fire and water thy line shall end, and it shall perish out of the land!"

For many years the curse withheld its hand. Sir Anthony (in spite of acting as proxy in Henry's marriage to Anne of Cleves) continued to bask in royal favour. He left Battle when he inherited Cowdray, and died full of peace and wealth.

His son was created Viscount Montague. Elizabeth favoured him, and visited him at Cowdray, a magnificent sixteenth-century castle with a great banqueting-hall, where she was entertained with madrigals, masques, and a breakfast feast which included three oxen and 140 geese.

The curse still bided its time, but in 1793, when the eighth Viscount Montague was abroad, Cowdray was gutted by fire. It was caused by careless servants preparing for the young Viscount's homecoming and wedding. They lit a bonfire in a high wind, and soon the whole castle was ablaze.

The following week Lord Montague, then twenty-four years of age, was drowned while trying to shoot the Schaffhausen Falls at Laufenburg, on the Rhine. As he and a friend tried to shoot a sixty-foot drop in a flat-bottomed boat, perhaps Lord Montague was interested in testing the efficacy of the curse.

The curse, though a slow-starter, was certainly efficient. Young Montague's title went to a distant relative, a monk. Though he obtained a dispensation to marry, he had no children, and the whole of the male line of Brownes had died out by 1797.

The property is now owned by Lord Cowdray, who has no connexion whatsoever with the family concerned in the curse. The ruins of the lovely old castle are still beautiful, and are once again cared for. The new house has a charm well suited to its lovely setting.

Elizabeth I visited Cowdray Castle in all its glory in 1591.

Elizabeth II goes there for less lavish occasions, chiefly to watch the Duke of Edinburgh playing polo. Cowdray is one of the chief polo-playing centres in England, and thousands of spectators visit the Park every year to watch the matches.

The National Trust own four and a half acres at Battle, where the creeper-clad ruins of the old Abbey are well worth seeing. Battle Abbey was built by William the Conqueror in gratitude for his victory over Harold, who was killed and left lying on the battlefield, "lacking all his beauty." Legend says that the altar of the Abbey was raised where Harold's body was found, so badly smashed that only his lover, Eadgyth Swan-Neck, could recognize him.

A little way inland from Battle lie BURWASH (pronounced Burrush) and BODIAM CASTLE.

Burwash once owned a royal manor, and the villagers were expected to supply Edward I with a sack of flour, a pair of spurs, one pound of pepper, three hens, and a cock every year. It was once in the heart of the smuggling country, and almost every family had a finger in that exciting pie.

Burwash is now famous on account of BATEMAN'S,* an early Jacobean house (it was built in 1634) in which Rudyard Kipling lived from 1903 till his death in 1936. The house, with an endowment and 300 acres of farmland, with two small houses and several cottages, was left to the National Trust by Mrs Kipling in her will. She stipulated that her husband's study should always be kept just as he left it. His books are still there, and the elbow-chair and the long oak table at which he worked, together with his writing materials. *Puck of Pook's Hill* and *Rewards and Fairies*, both of which were written at Bateman's, describe the surroundings of the old stone house, which Kipling loved.

Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay, and educated in Westward Ho, Devon, but before finally settling in England he travelled extensively, and spent some years in the States. In 1892 he married Caroline Starr Balestier, sister of the Wolcott Balestier to whom he dedicated his famous *Barrack Room Ballads*, and with whom he was joint-author of *The Naulahka*. He and his wife were living in Vermont when he wrote the two Jungle Books.

Kipling's study and other rooms, and the beautiful garden with its little stream and old water-wheel, are open to the public several afternoons a week and most of the day during Easter, Whit Monday, and on August Bank Holiday.

The National Trust also owns BODIAM CASTLE,* as well as the manor house, the Castle Hotel, and several cottages. The castle, which was built in 1386 as a protection against French raids, is one of the most beautiful and interesting ruins in England. It was once a magnificent curtain-wall, moated castle.

The property was willed to the National Trust by the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston. It is open to the public on week-days, and on Sunday afternoons between May and September.

The CINQUE PORTS of Sandwich, Dover, Hythe, Romney, and Hastings were incorporated as such by William the Conqueror. Later Winchelsea and Rye were added, but the number "Cinque" has always remained the same, though the original five were later reinforced

by Folkstone, Deal, Margate, Ramsgate, Faversham, Lydd, and Tenterden.

William's main idea was to build up some sort of maritime defence system, and by Edward I's reign the ports were expected to provide him with a fleet of 57 ships. The demands naturally grew with succeeding sovereigns, and by Edward III's reign the ports had to supply 105 ships and more than 2000 men. They also had to be prepared to send the ships to sea for fifteen days every year at their own expense. Up to the time of Henry VII the Cinque Ports had to supply the Crown with nearly all the ships and men needed to defend Southern England.

In return for these heavy outlays the Cinque Ports were granted many special and jealously guarded privileges. These included the right to all flotsam and jetsam washed up on their coast and the power to levy taxes and maintain their own courts. Their ships were also exempt from paying all harbour dues.

The Barons, or representatives, of the Cinque Ports were also granted the privilege of bearing the canopy over the sovereign at Coronations. Their ancient costume must have almost outshone the King himself. It consisted of a scarlet satin doublet slashed and cuffed with purple satin, and garnished with gold buttons and braid and with gold rosettes on the cuffs. They also wore full muslin ruffs, crimson silk hose, white shoes with crimson rosettes, the whole magnificent ensemble being completed with a black velvet Spanish hat sporting one scarlet and two black plumes. The present costume is considerably modified!

For the Coronation of Charles II the Barons of the Cinque Ports carried over his head a canopy of cloth of gold supported by six silver poles. On the corners were gilt balls which flashed in the sun (till the thunder started). By ancient right the Cinque Port Barons claimed the canopy as their perquisite, but its magnificence evidently aroused desire in the King's twenty-four attendant footmen, who brawled with the Barons for its possession. (The Earls of Northumberland and Ossery were meanwhile fighting over the possession of some of the regalia.)

For the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II no canopy was borne in the procession, but the right of the Cinque Port Barons to carry it was affirmed by the Coronation Court of Claims. This right probably dates from the time of John. He granted the Barons the privilege in return for the help they had given him on his voyages to and from Normandy.

For Elizabeth II's Coronation eighteen Barons from the Cinque Ports attended the ceremony in Westminster Abbey, wearing sixteenth-century suits in black and scarlet with velvet caps. One of their special privileges is to replace their caps when the peers replace their coronets.

As the caps cost about £30 each, it would have been a pity not to wear them.

In the Abbey the Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill, wore the magnificent and unique uniform of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports under his Garter mantle of blue velvet lined with white taffeta. As Lord Warden, Sir Winston wore a uniform resembling an admiral's. The cuffs of the long-tailed jacket were piped with red and gold, and the trousers were gold-striped. His magnificence was completed by wearing the historic Great George, lent to him for the occasion by the Victoria and Albert Museum. The badge, which shows a mounted St George slaying the dragon, is set with some 150 diamonds. It was presented to Sir Winston's ancestor, John Churchill¹, first Duke of Marlborough, by Queen Anne.

The present picturesque town of Winchelsea is "New" Winchelsea, laid out in the form of squares by Edward I on what was then a sea-washed promontory. "Old" Winchelsea was near where the remains of Camber Castle are now. It was swept into the sea in 1287.

A link with the fierce old days of French raids is still maintained at Winchelsea. A "watchman" is paid a few shillings annually to report to those electing the Mayor each year that no Frenchmen are in sight, and that it is therefore safe to go about their business!

Near Hythe (one of the Cinque Ports) stands SALTWOOD CASTLE, where the knights² who murdered Thomas à Becket slept on their way to Canterbury. At one time the castle was the chief residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, but Archbishop Cranmer (probably under "persuasion") transferred both the castle and its estates to Henry VIII. For some time after that it was the residence of the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. Queen Elizabeth visited it once, riding pillion with Sir Walter Raleigh. They stayed to dinner, and afterwards danced a sara-band together on the village green.

Earthquakes and neglect ruined the castle, but it was restored on medieval lines and furnished with seventeenth-century—and earlier—furniture, carpets, tapestries, and needlework. The restoration cost a fortune. It was carried out by the late Lady Conway, who at one time owned Saltwood, Allington,³ and Hurstmonceaux Castles. (Hurstmonceaux Castle, which was acquired by Greenwich Observatory within the last few years, is not open to the public. It is still, however, said to have its ghost—a nine-foot drummer who drums along the battlements. Hurstmonceaux, half manor, half castle, is built of brick, with slender

¹ See Chapter VIII.

² See Chapter V, under Knaresborough.

³ See Chapter V.

turrets and mullioned windows reflected in a beautiful moat starred with water-lilies.)

The original Saltwood Castle, a moated castle with twin towers, dates from before the time of William the Conqueror. Its present owners are Sir Kenneth Clark, former Director of the National Gallery, and Lady Clark.

[On the way from Canterbury after the murder of Thomas à Becket, on December 29, 1170, the four murderers spent a night at the Deanery at South Malling, near Lewes. The men—Reginald Fitzurse, Hugh de Morville, William de Tracy, and Richard le Bret—placed their arms on a table as they entered. But the table, a great, heavy table with an octagonal top cut from a solid slab of Petworth marble, “started back” as the four knights moved away, and flung their arms to the ground. Attendants replaced the weapons on the table, but once again it flung them off, and there are stories that sometimes, on December 29, the anniversary of Thomas à Becket’s death, the table spins round and round.

The table, an interesting example of craftsmanship, is now in Anne of Cleves’ house in Lewes, which is a museum.

After this unnerving experience in South Malling the four knights fled to Knaresborough, where they took refuge in Knaresborough Castle, at that time owned by Hugh de Morville. Afterwards they went to Rome, where they were granted absolution for their murder on condition that they did penance for life in the Holy Land.]

One of the bleakest stretches of the English coast is around DUNGENESS, where the fishermen’s cottages stand in a wilderness of stones. There are no trees, no gardens, no flowers, not a blade of grass—nothing but shingle blown up by the strong, never-ceasing winds. Beyond the shingle lie desolate marshes, and the fishermen still tell stories of how excisemen were trapped by escaping smugglers who knew every foothold in the treacherous marshland.

The fishermen’s cottages dot the bleak landscape, and here and there are derelict houses, forlorn as ghosts, reminders of the War and the time when Dungeness was almost in the front line.

Dungeness now holds a unique position on the coast—it is the only lifeboat station in England where women still help to launch the boat. Previously hundreds of women helped in this strenuous service at lifeboat stations all round the British coast, and especially on the East Coast. Where the beaches are suitable the launchers’ work is now done by tractors, but the loose, eternally shifting coarse shingle beach at

Dungeness would defeat any tractor. The launchers' work is always arduous, and on this exposed coast the women often have to go waist- or even shoulder-deep into rough seas to help with the launching.

There is sea in the blood of most Britishers, and the work of the lifeboats all round the long coastline is a gallant and courageous work that has been going on for more than 130 years. These boats have set up a great record totalling fifty people rescued every month of every year of their service.

The work of all the 150-odd lifeboats round both coasts from Wick to the Lizard, in Ireland, in the Shetland Islands, the Orkneys, and the Hebrides, is similar—equally dangerous, equally heroic. Dungeness, except for its additional problem of the shingle beach, is typical of most. Most of the crew are fishermen; most of the women launchers are their wives, mothers, sisters, or sweethearts. In fact, most of the four-hundred inhabitants of Dungeness are connected directly or indirectly with the lifeboat service—directly if they are members of the Tart and Oiller families, indirectly if there is a multiple rescue, and blankets, clothes, food, and shelter are needed for the rescued.

Women have been helping to launch the lifeboat at Dungeness since 1826. To-day nearly all the crew and the women launchers are members of the Tart and Oiller families—two names long known in the lifeboat service. Both families are descended from French fishermen who settled at Dungeness about the time of the Wars of the Roses. They have intermarried ever since.

The Dungeness beach is a never-ending problem. It is constantly silting up, and some fifty feet have been added in the last twelve months or so. The lighthouse-keeper used to fish from the lighthouse when he was a young man. It is now 150 yards from the sea.

The runway from the boat-shed is already far too short. The lifeboat is helpless at low tide, and at times has had to wait as long as three hours before a launching could be made. As one of the Dungeness crew said, "People can't always wait three hours to be rescued. It takes twenty-one years to make a man, but only three minutes to drown him!"

The present Dungeness lifeboat is one of the "Beach" type of boats, but heavier than some of her type, owing to the dangerous Channel conditions. She weighs about 15½ tons, and cost approximately £23,000 to build.

Enthusiasm, skill, and courage are the keynotes of the lifeboat service throughout the British Isles. Dungeness is no exception. Both launchers and crew take a pride in never missing a launch. For them it is a labour of love.

Standing a little apart from the fisherman's cottages, with their concrete, right-angled paths and roads, is the Pilot Inn, a squat, ugly concrete building with an old and interesting interior. It was built in 1623, and soon became the meeting-place of smugglers and those other, more brutal customers, the wreckers. They were the men who lured ships ashore by false signals. In 1644 a three-masted Spanish frigate, the *Alfresis*, was lured on to the beach by wreckers, and all her crew murdered. She was carrying a rich cargo of gold, jewellery, wine, and spirits. They have long been lost and forgotten, but the old hull of the *Alfresis* to-day forms the ceiling of the saloon bar of the Pilot Inn. In the original parlour, now a sitting-room, there is a secret cupboard in the ceiling designed to hold contraband, a trap-door through which accomplices could flash a warning or an "all clear" to smugglers at sea, and an escape-shaft leading to what was once an underground passage.

Fifty yards down the road to Lydd (one of the "reinforcement" towns for the Cinque Ports) is a clump of holly-bushes. Dungeness legend says that it marks the unorthodox burial-ground of many excisemen who came off worst in the battles of hide-and-seek with Kentish smugglers.

As in all other settlements along the coast from Cornwall to Essex, the smuggling skipper from the Marshes was a respected, or at least a welcome, member of society. His friends were not only the parson with whom he smoked a pipe, or the squire with whom he sipped brandy. His news of the outside world and his intimate knowledge of ship-movements along the French coast made him an invaluable secret agent, and a first-class smuggler was never without useful friends in high places.

In the eyes of the ordinary householder glamour walked for ever with the smugglers. Their tapping at the windows at dead of night brought a tingling excitement, a spice of danger, and fine silks, French dresses, tobacco, fine wines, rum, spirits, and whispered gossip of wild foreign parts.

Smuggling was not, however, just a glamorous interlude in otherwise law-abiding lives. It was a highly organized business, and, if the smuggling skipper knew his job, a highly remunerative one for every one concerned. Pitt said that, in the year 1784, out of 13 million lb of tea drunk in England, duty had been paid on only 5½ million lb. Every one enjoyed the duty-free tea if they could. Parson Woodforde's diary records that "Andrews the smuggler brought me this night about 11 o'clock a bagg of Hyson tea 6 pound weight. He frightened us a little by whistling under the parlour window just as we were going to

bed. I gave him some Geneva and paid him for the tea at 10/6 per pound."

One of the most usual methods of smuggling was the use of tub-boats. These were light and flimsy shells towed by luggers and equipped with lines and sinkers so that, if the luggers were hard-pressed by Revenue ships, they could be cast adrift and recovered later. The system was to collect shareholders from the neighbourhood who would invest £1 in a tub. When sufficient investors had been found the smuggling skipper and his crew set off on their adventure. If all went well the tubs, full of contraband, were handed over to the shareholders on payment of a second pound. The cost of the full tubs to the investor was thus £2, but their value was often as high as £10 to £15, for the spirits smuggled back from France were much over-proof, and could be watered down and still sold for a good profit.

There were women smugglers as well as men, strong country girls who enjoyed the danger and hardships of the rough sea-going adventures, girls who waited on shore till the time was ripe to swim out to collect tubs cast adrift by the cutters, and women who kept the coastal inns, like the Pilot Inn at Dungeness, ready and willing and very able to hoodwink the excisemen—and count it a good job well done.

Smuggling as big business went on as late as the 1870's, but even then a changing way of life was working towards its disappearance. Communication became too swift, steam replaced sail, and long before the end of the Victorian era smugglers, like highwaymen, had lost their livelihood if not their glamour.

VII

Escape from Worcester

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

CHARLES II, "a long dark man, above two yards high," was not yet twenty-one when he was defeated at the Battle of Worcester. As night was falling on that September day, 1651, he and a handful of followers rode out into the lovely, dangerous countryside. One of the men with him was

LORD WILMOT, who remained always a merry fugitive. He scorned any disguise except a hawk on his wrist; he was Charles's only companion in his final escape to France. Another of the small group of fugitives was

COLONEL CHARLES GIFFARD, of CHILLINGTON PARK,* Staffordshire, owner of the properties of WHITELADIES* and BOSCOBEL,* whose tenants were some of the five

PENDEREL brothers—William, Richard, Humphrey, George, and John. They were a Roman Catholic family of yeomen, but Charles could have found no finer bodyguard. They were helped with equal courage by their indomitable sister

ELIZABETH YATES, who fed Charles and misdirected the Roundhead soldiers while he was hiding in the woods and in the oak-tree with

COLONEL WILLIAM CARLOS, who had led the last charge at Worcester. Elizabeth Yates's husband,

FRANCIS YATES, also a poor countryman, gave Charles ten silver pieces to help him on his way. He paid with his life for his loyalty.

RICHARD PENDEREL accompanied the young, tired King on most of his desperate wanderings in Staffordshire, leading him from Whiteladies to the UPPER HOUSE, owned by

FRANCIS WOLFE, a staunch Royalist, in Madeley, near the Welsh border. When it was found that Charles had no hope of crossing the flooded and strictly guarded Severn river Richard Penderel led him back to Boscobel, and later he and his four brothers, all armed with bill-hooks, escorted the King to MOSELEY OLD HALL,* where he was guarded and tended by the owner,

THOMAS WHITGREAVE, and his valiant mother, and by the Old Hall's resident priest,

FATHER HUDDLESTON, who, many years later, attended Charles on his death-bed. From Moseley Old Hall Charles was taken at night across the dark heath to BENTLEY PARK, the home of

COLONEL JOHN LANE and his courageous sister,

MISTRESS JANE LANE, who had managed to secure a pass for herself and a servant to journey to a friend's home near Bristol. Charles, in disguise, rode with Mistress Lane to LEIGH COURT, Abbots Leigh. Here the loyal old butler,

JOHN POPE, tried to find a ship to take Charles to France. He failed, and Jane Lane and Charles moved on to TRENT, the home of

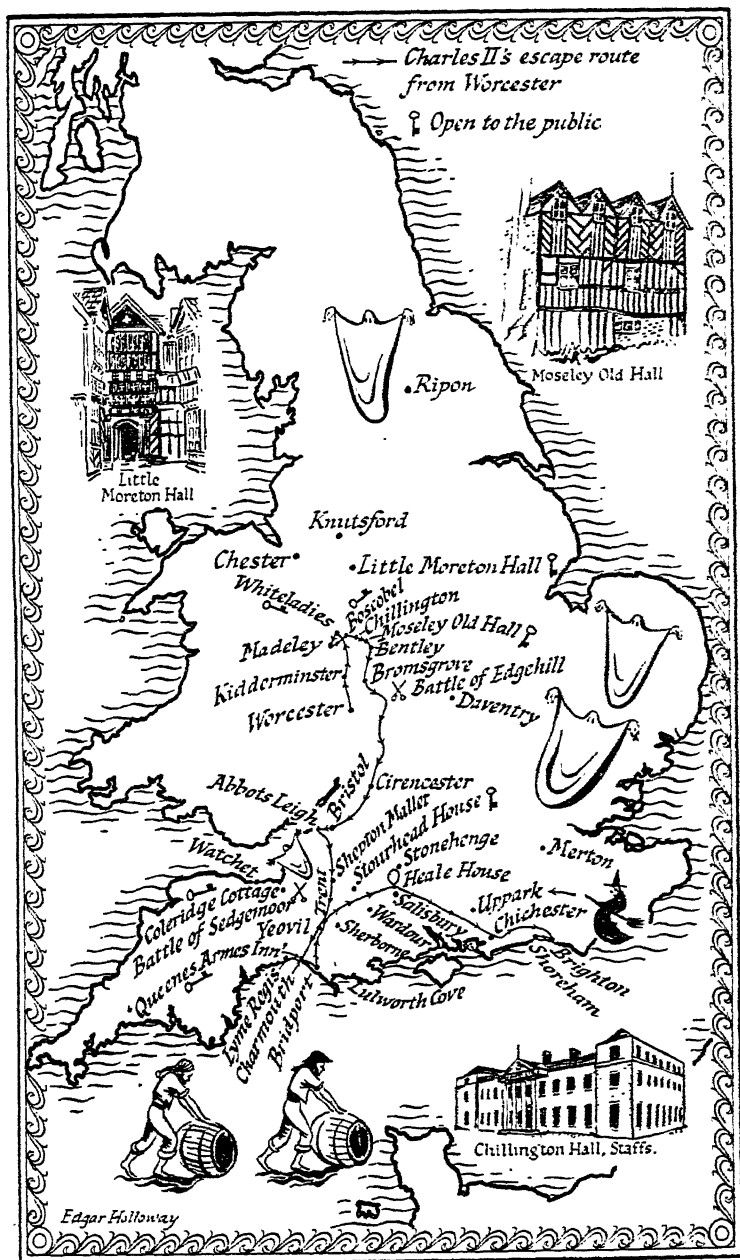
COLONEL FRANK WYNDHAM. Here, in a household of unproven loyalty, Colonel Wyndham, his young wife, their pretty young cousin,

JULIANA CONINGSBY, and two gallant little maidservants looked after Charles with the utmost secrecy.

Later another recruit was called in to help—

COLONEL ROBIN PHELIPPS, of MONTACUTE HOUSE*—and he rode with the party as they passed Sir Walter Raleigh's old home, Sherborne, riding on to HEALE HOUSE, near Stonehenge and Salisbury, and on to Brighthelmstone (now Brighton). Here at last a sea-captain,

NICHOLAS TATTERSALL, was found who was willing to carry the King to France—and forty-four days after their escape from Worcester Charles and Lord Wilmot landed safely in Normandy.



VII

Charles II was already a seasoned campaigner at the time of the Battle of Worcester. He had known plenty of responsibility during the Civil War. He was only fifteen when his father sent him to safeguard his interest in the West of England—a hopeless task for anyone, let alone a boy still in his teens. Since then he had known hardship, poverty, and constant disappointment. He had become King at eighteen, but his greatest adventure—his ordeal by pursuit—began with his flight from Worcester two years after the execution of his father.

Marching south from Scotland, where he had been crowned at Scone, Charles occupied the city of Worcester in August 1651. His sudden arrival had taken the Royalists by surprise, and they were unprepared, and unorganized, and on September 3 his army was routed, and King and Royalist troops were both on the run. Six thousand Royalists were lost that day, and all their baggage and artillery.

With a handful of followers, including Buckingham and Lord Wilmot, Charles rode out of the city into the lovely, lonely countryside. He himself wanted to ride to London, speeding ahead of the news of his defeat, and there take ship to France. But his followers dissuaded the desperate young King, and as night was falling they pressed on to WHITELADIES,* a ruined monastery and a house possessing secret hiding-places, and still inhabited by a family of yeomen. It was owned by the Giffard family. The clatter of the fugitives' horses aroused the tenants of Whiteladies, named Penderel, who, like the Colonel Charles Giffard, of CHILLINGTON PARK, who conducted the King there, were devout Roman Catholics. The fact that they were helping a Protestant King, however, made no difference to their loyalty, their unswerving courage and devotion. They were all to risk their lives many times over for their dark young King.

The Penderels now took charge of the exhausted and somewhat bewildered fugitives, and Charles's horse was taken inside for greater security. William Penderel, the eldest of the five Penderel brothers, was hastily summoned from his home, BOSCOBEL,* and the King, refreshing himself with sack and biscuits, changed out

of his sodden clothes (for "the heavens wept bitterly at these calamities") and put on some rough country clothes brought over by William, including a coarse hemp shirt, a green thread-bare coat, and a greasy old grey steeple hat turned up at the brim. His eternally cheerful companion, Lord Wilmot, began to cut off his Royalist locks, but he made so bad a job of it that Richard Penderel had to finish the operation with the aid of a basin and a pair of shears. To complete the disguise, Charles smeared his face and hands with dirt.

In spite of his weariness and bitter disappointment at his defeat at the hands of Cromwell's greatly superior army, Charles laughed at the picture he presented as he said good-bye to his followers. They left to ride north. He left, as dawn was breaking, to go into the woods with Richard Penderel.

All that long, wet day Charles hid in the wood, mostly on the alert, but at times slipping into a fitful sleep. At midday Penderel's sister, Mrs Francis Yates, took him a welcome blanket and "a mess of milk, eggs and sugar in a black earthen cup." The King "loved it very well," but Whiteladies and the countryside were already full of Roundheads, and Charles exclaimed at Mrs Yates's rashness. The stout-hearted woman replied, "Sir, I had rather die than discover you."

Charles still wanted to try to escape to London, but Richard Penderel persuaded him instead to try to cross to Wales, where he had many friends. In the end the King agreed, and as dusk was falling he and Penderel set out to walk to Madeley, ten miles away to the west, the King trying to copy Penderel's loping, countryman's walk. On their way across the heath they stopped for a "fricassee of bacon and eggs" at Hobbal Grange, the cottage home of Richard Penderel and his old mother, who was delighted and touched by this opportunity to serve her King. Out of the pitch-dark night Francis Yates arrived at the cottage with all his savings—thirty pieces of silver—which he offered to the King. The King would accept only ten, but Yates did not live long to enjoy the remaining twenty. He was hanged at Oxford for his share in the escape.

After Charles had eaten his fill of fricassee and bread and cheese he and Richard Penderel stole away into the darkness, making for Madeley.

They had a terrifying experience on the way.

As they neared a mill bridge the miller stepped out with a cudgel, demanding, "Who's there?" Penderel jumped into mid-stream, Charles following him, guided only by splashes as he

waded to the other bank. The miller pursued them through the dark night, but they eluded him, and lay panting and anxious under a hedge. Thankfully they listened to the retreating footsteps as the miller returned to guard his bridge; he was relieved that he had scared off "Roundheads," for he had Royalist fugitives hidden in the mill!

When the coast was clear Penderel and Charles walked on, Charles almost at the end of his tether with weariness, but being urged on and on by the staunch woodcutter. As they reached the outskirts of the town Charles was left in hiding, while Penderel went on to rouse Francis Wolfe, a Royalist sympathizer, of UPPER HOUSE, Madeley. Penderel asked him if he would help a "Royalist fugitive of rank" to cross the Severn into Wales. Wolfe replied that the town was full of Roundhead troops, the Severn heavily patrolled, and that he would undertake such perilous risks for no one but the King himself. When Penderel admitted that his "fugitive of rank" was indeed the King, Wolfe and his wife and daughter unhesitatingly promised to do all in their power to help. As all the hiding-places in their house were well known, Charles was hidden for two days in a hayloft. The Wolfes gave him food, money, and new stockings and shoes in place of the Penderels' rough ones that had taken such toll of his feet on their cross-country flight. Francis Wolfe's wife, Mary, stained Charles's swarthy face darker still with dye from walnuts—but once again disappointment awaited Charles. The Severn was in high flood, and impassable, so once again he had to make a night flight, this time back to Boscobel.

By this time there was another fugitive hiding at Boscobel, Colonel William Carlos (or Careless), who had led the last charge at Worcester. When Charles staggered into the house he was exhausted by his night marches in other men's shoes, but he revived after William Penderel's wife, Joan, had treated his blistered feet and given him a breakfast of bread and cheese and small beer. By now it was almost daylight, and Carlos advised Charles to hide in the woods, as the house was sure to be searched. They spent the day together, hidden by the foliage of a dense pollard oak. William Penderel threw up some cushions, and his wife some bread and cheese, but the two men spent a desperately uncomfortable day in the greatest peril. The oak-tree stood near a path through the wood, and from their grandstand Charles and his companion could see the Roundheads searching all around them. Joan Penderel worked close by all day long, gathering sticks and

nuts. She was later accused of being "the person who gathered sticks and diverted the horsemen from the oak his majesty was in."

Despite the discomfort and the danger, Charles fell asleep in the tree, his head resting on the Colonel's arm so heavily that it went numb, so that "he scarcely had strength left in it to support his majesty from falling from the tree." The Roundheads were "hunting so greedily after him" it was too dangerous even to whisper, and poor Carlos was in the end "constrained to practise so much incivility. . . . as to pinch his majesty to wake him."

At nightfall, as the Roundheads moved off, Charles and Carlos returned to Boscobel, where, after a most welcome meal of chickens, Charles spent the night in a priest-hole not much bigger than himself, that had been built in the attic floor. In the meantime Humphrey Penderel came in with disturbing news. He had been accosted by a Roundhead officer, who suspected that he knew the King's whereabouts, and when Humphrey stoutly denied all knowledge he showed him a proclamation threatening death to anyone who aided "Charles Stuart, a long dark man, above two yards high," and offering a reward of £1000 to anyone who would betray him.

Charles, who had known poverty intimately for many years, was dismayed at the news, for he knew how desperately poor the Penderels were, though perhaps even he did not realize how hard put to it they were to find food for two extra, hungry mouths. But Carlos stated the truth when he told Charles that the Penderels would not betray him for a reward a thousand times greater than the £1000.

The whole of the next day—a Sunday—Charles spent quietly at Boscobel, a black-and-white hunting-lodge which is now a farmhouse. Plans had now to be carried a stage further, and after a scouting expedition by John Penderel it was decided to take Charles to Thomas Whitgreave's home, MOSELEY OLD HALL,* where the cheerful Lord Wilmot would meet him and try to help his escape to the coast.

Moseley Old Hall was a beautiful old manor house strewn with secret hiding-places. It was about eight miles away from Boscobel, and as Charles's feet were still in too bad a shape for such a walk through enemy-infested country, he rode Humphrey Penderel's old mill-horse the greater part of the way. His bodyguard were the five devoted Penderel brothers (William, George, Humphrey, Richard, and John), who walked beside him through the stormy night armed with bill-hooks and pistols, ready to die if need be.

Moseley had its own resident priest, Father Huddleston, who acted both as chaplain and as tutor to three boys living in the house. Now Father Huddleston went out to meet the King, and conducted him back through a long walk of trees and through the garden, still clad like a countryman in rough, sweaty clothes. In fact, Whitgreave did not know which of the weary group was the King until Wilmot stepped forward crying, "This is my master, your master, and the master of us all!"

Charles and the Penderels were given food, and Charles some clean clothes, including a shirt and handkerchief. His nose had bled badly one night, and his own handkerchief was much soiled. Father Huddleston treasured both it and the discarded shirt. His friends afterwards found them efficacious against the King's Evil.

Charles enjoyed a good night's sleep, and woke feeling refreshed and fighting fit. He spent the day watching the road from the windows, Huddleston's three young pupils watching with him.

Once again Charles had a terrifying experience.

Southall, a notorious priest-catcher, arrived to search the house. Charles was bundled into a small cupboard, and through a trap-door into a cramped, stuffy hiding-place. He lay there almost afraid to breathe, Southall missed his prey—but there was another fright awaiting Charles before he finally left Moseley Old Hall.

Whitgreave, who had sent all but one trusted servant into the fields, rode over to BENTLEY PARK to ask the owner, Colonel John Lane, if he might stable some of his horses there. Whitgreave's own stables adjoined the road, and horses saddled ready for an emergency would arouse suspicion. Lane willingly agreed, and gave Whitgreave a valuable suggestion for the King's next move. His sister Jane had procured a pass from the Roundheads for herself and a servant to go to Bristol to see a friend who was pregnant. Lane suggested that Charles should go as the servant.

Charles was delighted at the news, and lightheartedly entertained Huddleston and Whitgreave with stories of some of his adventures. Huddleston showed the King the secret chapel, a little plain room with crucifix and candles—but before the afternoon was out a new crisis had developed.

A servant ran in with the warning that the Roundheads were on their way to arrest Whitgreave on a charge at having fought at Worcester. Hastily he packed Charles into his priest-hole, and, with an appearance of calm, awaited the soldiers. Whitgreave was seized, and would have been taken away had not neighbours rallied round and protested that he had been too ill at the time of

the Battle of Worcester to have taken part. After long and angry argument the Roundheads departed, but Whitgreave stayed away from the King as long as they remained in the town. In fact, he stayed away so long that Charles thought he had been abandoned.

After that alarm all was quiet till midnight, when Colonel Lane arrived with two horses. After taking leave of old Mrs Whitgreave and her son Charles rode off through the night with Colonel Lane, the King wearing Huddleston's cloak against the cold. Old Mrs Whitgreave was one of the heroines of Charles's escape and of the escape of Royalist soldiers after Worcester. Many of them struggled up to Moseley, half starved after living for days on cabbage-stalks and scraps from fields. All of them were tenderly cared for by Mrs Whitgreave, who well knew what she risked by aiding any of the Royalist party.

Charles and Lane rode across the heath to Bentley Park, where Lord Wilmot, still as cheerful and optimistic as ever, was awaiting them. That night Jane Lane's new "servant" slept in the servants' quarters. Before dawn he was up and about again, suitably dressed as "William Jackson," a farmer's son, and, fetching the horses from the stable, he waited, hat in hand, for his "mistress" to appear. At dawn they set off, Charles riding pillion with Jane, and wearing a grey suit and high black hat. He had £20 in his pocket now, a gift from Lane "to bear the charge of the journey."

For a week Charles and Jane rode together, facing danger every mile of the road. At Stratford-on-Avon they met a posse of troopers face to face. Though their hearts must have sunk, the travellers put a brave face on it, and the soldiers opened their ranks to let them through, returning Charles's respectful salute. At a ford, where soldiers were on watch for Charles, they were accosted by the Roundheads, but Jane Lane diverted their attention by abusing Charles for carelessness and cuffing him soundly.

They had their laughs, too.

At Bromsgrove the horse cast a shoe, and Charles, talking to the village smith, asked for current news. The smith replied that he had heard no news since Worcester, nor did he know if the rogue Charles Stuart had yet been caught. The King replied that Charles deserved to be hanged for bringing in the Scots. The smith averred that he spoke like an honest man.

And so Jane and Charles rode together for six days. Jane, who combined looks with wit, "by her pleasant conversation made the King forget his danger on the ride to Bristol." Once there, they made for Leigh Court, at Abbots Leigh, three miles to the west,

the home of Mrs Norton, the pregnant friend Jane had journeyed to see. There Jane told the old Royalist butler, John Pope, that her servant was suffering from ague, and must have a bed in a private chamber. The kindly Pope agreed, and took the "patient" a bowl of broth he was very pleased to see. The following morning Charles woke up hungry, and made his way downstairs to the buttery, where he found Pope and some other men, including a trooper who had fought in his own Guards.

"Have you seen the King?" asked Charles, munching bread and cheese, and hoping to allay suspicion by this direct attack.

"Aye, twenty times!" declared the trooper.

"What sort of man is he?" continued Charles.

The man looked at him appraisingly.

"A good four fingers' breadth taller than you!" he declared emphatically, and the King breathed freely again. But the King found Pope looking at him quizzically. He hoped he had not been recognized, but later, as he took off his hat politely and stood aside to allow Mrs Norton to pass him in a passage, Pope stared all the more keenly. Charles decided to have it out with him, and sent for Pope, who fell on his knees with tears in his eyes. From then on he performed many good offices for the King. A West Country legend says that the cook at Leigh Court was a staunch Royalist, and quick-witted too. One morning, when soldiers entered the kitchen, Charles was standing there, idling. The cook, realizing his danger, threw an old coat over him and basted him soundly with a ladle for neglecting his kitchen duties.

Pope now turned his attention to finding a ship to take the King to France, but he searched in vain. But he saved the day later on when disaster threatened to stop Charles and Jane moving from Leigh Court to another Royalist manor. This was TRENT, near Sherborne, owned by Colonel Frank Wyndham. Just as Charles and Jane were ready to set out Mrs Norton miscarried. As she was seriously ill, and the servants' loyalty an unknown quantity, some good excuse had to be found for her friend Jane to leave her after coming all the way from Moseley expressly to be with her. Pope concocted a letter to say that Jane's father was seriously ill. He handed it to her at supper, when several of the servants were present, and Jane's acting carried the situation through. Lord Wilmot, who was staying at a house near by, was sent on to warn the Wyndhams, and early next morning Charles and Jane set out for Trent.

They arrived there just a fortnight after Charles's flight from

Worcester, to be warmly welcomed by Wyndham and his young wife, who were delighted at the dangerous honour that was being conferred on them. He stayed there many days, with only the Wyndhams, their cousin Juliana Coningsby, and two valiant little maidservants knowing of his presence. The two maids cooked food for the fugitive, and with the aid of a rope secretly passed it up the chimney to Charles's suite of rooms.

The day after their arrival at Trent, Jane set out on her return journey. Roundhead intelligence, however, soon discovered that Charles had been helped to escape by a woman, and Colonel Lane and his sister both found it wise to flee till after the Restoration.

As Jane set out on her long ride home Charles and Wyndham held a conference, and the following day Wyndham rode across to LYME REGIS to try to find a ship.

He found a captain who declared himself willing to run two Royalist fugitives to the Continent, and he booked rooms at the QUEENE'S ARMES INN* at Charmouth, where, to divert suspicion, he said they were for a gentleman and a young lady who were eloping. Wilmot was to be the groom, Juliana Coningsby the bride, and Charles their servant. But though the three travellers arrived at the inn to find a fair wind blowing for France, the sea-captain failed to keep his appointment. The "groom and bride" had an uncomfortable experience, watched all night long by the other visitors with avid interest. As dawn came, and the tide had been missed, Charles and his companions, who were attracting too much attention, set off for BRIDPORT, a thriving seaport long famous for its ropes, lines, and fishing-nets. It was only later that they learnt that the sea-captain, having told his wife that he was off to France with a dangerous cargo, had been locked up in his room—and his trousers hidden—and released only on condition that he abandon the proposed journey.

The ride to Bridport nearly ended in disaster.

Wilmot's horse cast a shoe, and when he led the animal into the smithy he told the smith that he had come from Exeter. But the smith noticed that the other shoes on the horse were of Midland make. He remembered the stories of the King's escape, and of the £1000 reward. Could this be the King, he wondered. Excitedly he hurried off to consult the local minister, who fortunately was long at his devotions. Together they sought a J.P., who was equally long-winded, and finally un-co-operative as well. At last they found a Captain Massey of the Cromwellian Army. He was most interested in what they had to say, and ordered his men out.

All unconscious of the frenzy being stirred up in their wake, Charles and his companions continued their way past Bridport, where, on a sudden impulse, they decided to strike up a lane leading to the hills. Only a few minutes after they had turned aside from the road Captain Massey's pursuing troops galloped past.

The little country lane at Bridport is now marked with a stone on which is engraved:

King Charles II escaped capture through this lane

Sept. iii MDCLI

When midst your fiercest foes on every side

For your escape God did a lane provide.

Meanwhile Charles, Wilmot, and Juliana were still unconscious of their close peril. Later on that day they became lost, and put up for the night at a little wayside inn miles from anywhere. But Fate did not allow Charles one easy stage on his escape, and during the night Roundhead soldiers took possession of the inn, pausing for refreshment on their way to the coast. At daybreak the soldiers left—and Charles breathed more easily. Shortly afterwards he and his companions returned sadly but gratefully to Trent.

Charles remained here another week. One day, as he told Pepys many years later, "There was a rogue, a trooper come out of Cromwell's army, that was telling people he had killed me, and that that was my buff coat which he then had on." Another day he heard the church-bells ringing joyfully—in honour of his death! In spite of his peril, laughter was never far away from Charles's heart, and he laughed now to hear the bells ringing out their false message of good cheer!

But there was no time to lose, and Wyndham turned to a neighbour for help—Colonel Robin Phelipps, of MONTACUTE HOUSE,* who promised to charter a ship if it were humanly possible. He had no luck at Portsmouth, and suggested he should try at Chichester. To be nearer in hand, in case of sudden success in their search, Charles, once again in attendance on pretty young Juliana Coningsby, rode from Trent with Phelipps through the dangerous countryside across which swarms of soldiers were pouring on their way to the conquest of Jersey. The trio skirted Gillingham Forest and stopped at an inn at Mere, where the landlord, who knew Phelipps, drew drinks for the company, and, turning to Charles, said, "Thou lookest an honest fellow. Here's a health to his Majesty!" When Charles naturally hesitated to

drink the landlord berated him, and Phelipps, for bringing a scurvy Roundhead fellow to his inn!

All that day the travellers rode on, putting up for the night at HEALE HOUSE, a few miles from Salisbury, where a Royalist widow woman was expecting them. The following day it was felt safer for Charles to be away from the house, so he and Robin Phelipps visited Stonehenge and kept out of harm's way. As evening fell the King slipped into Heale House by a back entrance and was smuggled upstairs to a secret hiding-place. He stayed there in security for five days while Phelipps and other friends, including Lord Wilmot (who scorned any disguise but a hawk upon his wrist) and an impoverished Sussex Royalist, George Gounter, scoured the coast for a ship. Gounter had already suffered harshly for the cause, but, like the Penderels and the Whitgreaves, the Lanes and the Wyndhams, he never hesitated when asked to help still further. He had already lost so much. He had little but his life left to lose! Gounter died before Charles could reward him for his devoted service, but he adopted his son, and educated him at Winchester and Oxford.

All day long, for five days, the men searched for a vessel and a willing captain. Eventually they found a captain, Nicholas Tattersall, the master of a coal-trading vessel at Brighthelmstone (now called Brighton). He agreed to carry two fugitives for £60 cash.

Now the tempo was quickening again, and in the early hours of the morning Charles and Phelipps set out from Heale House, beset by alarms. They had to pass various troops of Roundheads, and a hunt attended by anti-Royalists, finally linking up with Wilmot, and at last coming to the George Inn in Brighthelmstone. Here Tattersall, after glancing sideways at the King throughout their meal, recognized him, but he said, "Be not troubled. I think I do God and my country good service in preserving the King, and by the grace of God, I will venture my life and all for him, and set him safely on shore if I can in France."

Again, later that evening, "as the King was standing with his hands upon the back of a chair by the fire-side," the innkeeper "kneeled down and kissed his hand privately, saying that he would not ask him who he was, but bid God bless him whither he was going." Thus the King told Pepys as he walked up and down the quarter-deck of the ship bringing him back to England—nine years later.

Now Charles's journey into exile was almost done. At 2 A.M. he and Wilnot set out from the inn, making their way through the dark night to the coast at Shoreham, where Tattersall's vessel, *The Surprise*, was awaiting them. They climbed aboard—and waited for the tide.

At last they weighed anchor, Tattersall steering for his accustomed destination of Poole, his crew of four men and a boy staring at the two passengers with the greatest interest. At Tattersall's suggestion Charles induced the crew, innocent of their captain's intention, to join him in "persuading" him to take him and his companion to France. Charles backed his story of how they were merchants fleeing from debt, with the promise of a reward when they reached the Continent. The men willingly agreed. Tattersall gave in to the concerted "persuasion," and the following morning Charles landed in France.

He had left Worcester on the evening of September 3. He landed at Fécamp at dawn on October 16. On the days in between he had known hunger and physical distress, danger, discomfort, and weariness beyond all telling. But, though observers in France noticed a new seriousness in his dark young face, he had known gusts of laughter too, and, above all, he had known such loyalty and devotion as few men are privileged to experience.

Nothing remained now—or so it seemed.

But that loyalty and devotion, and the calm courage that went with it, was a flame that could not be extinguished. It set alight the hearts of the people who planned and worked for the King's return, and the hearts of the people who greeted him so rapturously nine years later, on the eve of his thirtieth birthday. They rang the bells, they strewed the way with flowers, they shouted themselves hoarse, they stunned him with their acclamation.

Two days later Pepys recorded in his diary: "This day the month ends, I in very good health, and all the world in a merry mood because of the King's coming."

SINCE THEN

Considering that it is more than three hundred years since Charles II escaped from Worcester, a surprising number of the houses in which he hid during his forty-four-day escape to the South Coast and France are still standing. That they are standing is probably due to the fact that his

adventures came after that great period of destruction for so many of the great houses—and particularly those owned by Royalist sympathizers—the Civil War.

The old house of WHITELADIES, owned by the Giffards of Chillington Park, no longer exists, but there are still some remains of the Cistercian Nunnery,* which dates from the time of Richard I or his bad brother, John. They are now cared for by the Office of Works, and are open to the public every day.

BOSCOBEL,* also formerly owned by the Giffards, is still standing, not greatly altered since the days when William Penderel hid Charles there at such peril to them both. It is a large, not particularly handsome farmhouse. Part of it is occupied, and the farm is still worked. The other part of the house is open to the public every day, and, though the actual great pollard oak that hid King Charles was destroyed many years ago, one of its descendants is growing well and lustily.

The UPPER HOUSE, Madeley, has been considerably altered and modernized, but it is still a picturesque house standing well back from the road in its own grounds, which are very pretty. In the hall of the old house, which still has its Jacobean panelling and balustrades, is an old panel cut from the wainscoting of the dining-room. It is inscribed F.W. 1621 M.W., and was probably carved during the occupation of the house by the Francis and Mary Wolfe who befriended Charles. The priest's hole in the attic is still there. Charles did not hide there, for it had already been discovered, but the old barn where Francis Wolfe hid him among the corn and hay is still there too.

One of the treasures of the Upper House is a silver tankard with this inscription:

Given by King Charles II
at the Restoration
to F. Wolf of Madaley
in whose house he had been secreted
after the defeat of Worcester
1680

The date is a puzzle. If that were the year in which the tankard was presented (twenty years after the Restoration) it shows that Charles had indeed a long memory for those who assisted him. But it is more likely to have been a misprint for 1660. The King also increased the armorial bearings of the family by adding to the hereditary crest of the wolf a crown resting on a wolf's paw.

In the eighteenth century the barn was used as a market-house, and

butchers' stalls are still visible, though the upper part was recently rebuilt.

Colonel Charles Giffard, of CHILLINGTON PARK,* the Penderels' landlord at Whiteladies and Boscobel, was a descendant of the Sir John Giffard who was friendly enough with Henry VIII to be presented by him with a black panther. Giffard already had a menagerie, and the panther was a handsome addition from an indulgent sovereign. But one day the animal escaped.

Sir John seized his cross-bow, and, followed by his son, set out in pursuit of the panther, which was already making its way across-country. As the men crossed a stream they heard a scream of terror. Rushing up a hill on the other side, they saw the panther crouched ready to spring on a woman and her baby.

Sir John fitted a bolt to his cross-bow. As he was about to shoot his son cried, "*Prenez haleine; tirez fort!*" ("Take breath; pull strongly!")

The knight took a deep breath, steadied his aim, and shot. The bolt struck the panther in mid-flight, killing him instantly.

As a reward for his prowess, Sir John was allowed to commemorate the incident on two crests, one depicting a panther's head, the other a knight drawing his cross-bow. A wooden cross, known as Giffard's Cross, now marks the scene of Sir John's feat of arms. It stands near the present Lodge.

The Giffard family have owned Chillington Estate for nearly eight hundred years in direct male line. Chillington Park manor was originally built in Henry VIII's reign, but it was rebuilt in the eighteenth century. The rebuilding was probably necessary after the rough usage the old manor received during the Civil War.

At one time Chillington, among other Staffordshire houses, was considered as a prison for Mary Queen of Scots,¹ but the suggestion was rejected owing to the Giffards being Roman Catholics, and therefore likely to be too sympathetic towards her.

The principal attraction of Chillington Park is the magnificent approach by an avenue of oaks some two miles long. The grounds are extensive and wooded, and include a large sheet of water known as Chillington Pool. Visitors are allowed at certain times.

MOSELEY OLD HALL,* though it has been much altered, is still in excellent condition. The house was originally half-timbered, but about 1870 it was cased in red brick, and the half-timbering obscured.

¹ See Chapter V.

The ingenious hiding-places were not destroyed, however, and they can still be inspected on the days when the house is open to the public.

When Charles was staying at Moseley Old House he is said to have promised Father Huddleston, on that day when the priest showed him the tiny secret chapel, that one day he too would embrace Roman Catholicism.¹ In any case, the King did not forget the Father, and after the Restoration he protected him from the dangers of anti-Catholic feeling by keeping him under his own eye at Whitehall Palace.

As he lay dying Charles was persuaded by his brother James, Duke of York, to see a priest. When Charles consented it was Father Huddleston who was summoned. By then he was an old man.

James announced him by saying, "Sire, here is the man who saved your life, and is now come to save your soul."

"He is very welcome," whispered the dying King.

BENTLEY HALL, the former home of the Lane family, was demolished some years ago, but the site of the old Hall is marked by a concrete plinth (known as the Cairn). The small area of land surrounding this memorial to the Colonel and his courageous sister, Mistress Jane, is owned by the neighbouring town of Walsall. More than two hundred acres on all sides of the Cairn are now owned by the Darlaston Urban District Council and are being developed as a housing estate. Some hundreds of houses are already finished and occupied.

The land immediately surrounding the Cairn will be developed as a special feature of the estate. Part of the land, for instance, is being reserved for a future Community Centre. Another part will be used to build a church hall and vicarage, for the Council is anxious that the site of the former Hall should be the focal point of the whole estate now under development.

At present the only perpetuation of the name Lane in the neighbourhood is an inn known as the Lane Arms, its sign bearing a reproduction of what are reputed to be the arms of the Lane family.

After the Restoration Jane received many presents from the King, including miniatures and snuff-boxes and a gold watch which he asked might descend by succession to the eldest daughter. It later came into the possession of the Lucy family, of Charlecote; Maria, a great-great-granddaughter of Colonel John Lane (Jane's brother), having married John Lucy.

Colonel John Lane was given a large grant, while the Penderels received pensions, presents, and gifts for their grandchildren. The

¹ See Chapter IX.

Lanes were granted the privilege of depicting on their crest a strawberry roan and the legend "Garde le Roy." The official heraldic description of the Lanes' crest is, "a strawberry roan horse, couped at the flanks proper, bridled sable, and holding between the feet an Imperial crown also proper." The term "proper" means anything depicted in its natural colours.

LEIGH COURT at Abbots Leigh, near Bristol, had been given to the Norton family by Edward VI, and it was here that Jane Lane and the young King were helped so valiantly by the quick wits of John Pope, the butler.

In 1916 Leigh Court became a girls' school for a time. Later it was used as a home for women and girls requiring care and control. It is now conducted as a hospital on the same lines, for sub-normal women and girls, under the National Health Scheme.

TRENT MANOR HOUSE, where Colonel Wyndham and his young wife, their pretty young cousin Juliana Coningsby, and the two little serving maids guarded and fed Charles, is still standing.

During the Second World War the old manor was requisitioned, and occupied by troops during the whole war period.

Since the troops left, a good deal of the old house has been demolished, to reduce it to a size more suitable for present-day small families.

The centre part, however, containing Charles's hiding-place, has been left untouched. In this room the floor opened, and any fugitive hiding there could drop to the floor below by slipping through the rafters. The two little serving-maids passed food up to Charles from the kitchen by a rope in the chimney, and he took delivery through secret shutters in the oak panelling.

Not far from Trent there was once an old pit into which a coach and horses, its driver, and all the passengers disappeared one dark and stormy night. Not a trace of the coach, the horses, the driver, or the passengers was ever seen again . . . but galloping horses are still heard thundering past on the old highway.

THE QUEENES ARMES INN* at Charmouth, where Lord Wilmot and Juliana Coningsby played out the farce of being an eloping couple under the too interested eyes of the townsfolk, became the residence of a chapel minister for a time, long after Charles's adventures there. For the past fifteen or twenty years, however, it has been a private hotel. At the time of the change-over various alterations were made, and one

or two seventeenth-century fireplaces were uncovered, as well as a sixteenth-century doorway.

Charles II was not the only member of the royal family to have visited the old (and still very attractive) *Queenes Armes*. Catherine of Aragon visited it once, too.

MONTACUTE HOUSE,* the home of Robin Phelipps' family, near Yeovil, in Somerset, is a wonderful old mansion, begun in 1588 by Sir Thomas Phelipps, and finished by his son Sir Edward. He was Speaker of the House of Commons that was to have been blown up by Guy Fawkes.

This Sir Edward had Parliamentary sympathies during the Civil War, but his household, like many another, was divided against itself. His son Edward sold some tapestries to fit himself out for war on the King's side, and he rode out in full armour to take part in the sieges of Exeter and Bristol. His other son was the Robin Phelipps who helped Charles II to escape.

Dutch gables and large stone mullioned windows are features of this delightful old mansion, which is built of local yellowstone. It stands three storeys high, the second storey being balustraded and decorated with nine statues known as the Nine Worthies.

Two rooms are of particular interest. One is the Great Chamber, where the four great windows are emblazoned with forty-two coats-of-arms in stained glass. The other is the Long Gallery, a tremendous room which stretches right across the building on the third floor. It is 180 feet long. At one time it was used to exercise the Phelipps' ponies on wet days!

The stately beauty of Montacute House is matched by the stately charm of its formal square gardens, surrounded by balustraded walls on which peacocks once strutted. Like *Hidcote Manor*¹ and *Compton Wynyates*,¹ there are trimmed yew-hedges at Montacute, bordering bowling greens, shady grass walks, and a sunken garden.

The property, which was given to the National Trust in 1931, includes twenty-four cottages and more than 300 acres.

Montacute House is open to visitors most days throughout the year.

HEALE HOUSE, near Salisbury, where Charles hid for five days with Robin Phelipps and other friends, has been much altered since those days, but the main part of the building is the original structure, late Elizabethan and early Jacobean.

¹ See Chapter IV, under *Neighbouring Pleasures*.

Heale House is now a Home of Healing, where Nature-cure treatments are carried out. It stands in a lovely old terraced garden. The Avon flows along one side of the garden, its streamlets wandering through the property.

NEIGHBOURING PLEASURES

There is a delightful, fragmentary legend attached to WORCESTER, where Charles II was so soundly beaten by the Cromwellian Army in 1651.

St Wulfstan, who was associated with the foundation of the Cathedral, was Bishop of Worcester for some time before he died in 1095. He was once so engrossed in cooking a goose for his dinner that he forgot he had to preach a sermon. The good man forswore meat from that day on.

Prince Rupert, Charles II's reckless—but capable—cousin, did not fight for him at Worcester. He had fought during the Civil War in many engagements, including Edgehill and Naseby, but after the execution of Charles I he commanded a navy for Charles II.

During the Civil War, when he was stationed at Chester with the Royalist troops, one of the ladies he entertained to supper was Eleanor Pennington, sister of Lady Shakerley, with whom she was staying at GRESFORD. A hundred and fifty Roundheads arrived to be billeted on Lady Shakerley, and Eleanor, overhearing their plans, put on some clothes borrowed from the ranger's wife, and, slipping out of the house at dead of night, rode off to Chester to warn Prince Rupert.

Prince Rupert was so taken with the girl's charms and courage that he begged a letter from her, which he wore, in truly romantic fashion, on a ribbon round his neck.

Eleanor's brother-in-law, Sir Geoffrey Shakerley, was cast in much the same pattern of courage and enterprise. During the Battle of Rowton Moor he crossed the Dee in a tub, swimming his horse. He offered to return the same way, with fresh orders from the King, but the King hesitated—and the battle was lost.

Sir Geoffrey, though wounded, was able to make his way home to Gresford, but there he was captured by the Roundheads. They bound him to a tree, and were erecting a scaffold on which to hang him when he was rescued in the nick of time by the unexpected arrival of Prince Rupert and his men.

The Roundheads fled, but one of them turned to fire a parting shot. It missed Sir Geoffrey, but it struck Eleanor through the breast.

Rupert himself carried the girl into the house, crying, "I shall avenge thee!" and she died in his arms.

Not far north of Chester is KNUTSFORD, famous for its curious and ancient custom of sanding the streets for special occasions—and for Higgins, a highwayman of dash and renown.

Friends of the bride and groom used to strew the streets with brown sand, and form patterns in the sand and with flowers in honour of a wedding. When Queen Victoria visited Knutsford the streets were decorated with sand in her honour, and when Elizabeth Stevenson married William Gaskell verses in honour of the occasion were written in sand. Elizabeth Stevenson became famous as a novelist under her married name, and Knutsford is the setting for her *Cranford*.

Higgins the highwayman made Knutsford his headquarters, galloping out on moonless nights on his big mare with its hoofs quietened by socks. His excursions sometimes took him as far afield as Bristol, and across the Welsh borders, and no wise traveller ventured along the roads alone. Like most of his kind, he was caught—and hanged in 1767.

In the tenth century there was a very strange incident in CHESTER itself.

After a long and severe drought Lady Trawst of Hawarden sent up prayers for rain to the statue of the Virgin Mary. The prayers were answered to such good purpose that the downpour that followed was severe enough to loosen the statue. It fell on the still-praying Lady Trawst, and killed her.

The horrified townsfolk at once "arrested" the statue, and submitted it to trial by jury. After a solemn conviction as "Guilty" the point arose—what could they do with the statue? It could not be hanged, it could not be burnt, but perhaps it could be drowned. So the statue was tied to a cross and flung into the Dee. The tide carried it to Chester, and deposited it beneath the ancient walls. It was found there, and carried reverently to St John's Church.

A very famous old Cheshire house is LITTLE MORETON HALL,* not far from Sandbach. It is now standing very much aslant, but otherwise it is still the finest half-timbered house in Cheshire. As they specialize in such buildings in Cheshire, it is probably the finest half-timbered house in England. The beautiful old house still towers over the countryside, its great overhanging bay windows reflected in its ancient moat. The house is open every day except during the beginning of November, and the winding staircases, the tiny rooms, and the great chambers

can all be inspected. There is also an interesting priest's hole, leading to an underground passage below the moat. Elizabeth is supposed to have danced and slept at Little Moreton Hall. In any case, there is a fireplace in the kitchen large enough to have roasted an ox to feed so good a trencherman and her followers.

LYME REGIS, where Charles II was disappointed by the sea-captain who had been locked up by his wife, held an even greater disappointment for his eldest son, James Crofts,¹ Duke of Monmouth.

Monmouth's mother was Lucy Walter, probably the first of Charles's long line of mistresses, but though, as Pepys said, the King doted on him "beyond measure," he was possibly not Monmouth's father at all. Lucy Walter had previously been the mistress of both Algernon and Robert Sidney, and Monmouth resembled Robert strikingly, "even to a wart on his face." Charles's brother, later James II, certainly never believed Monmouth was his brother's son.

But Charles always acknowledged him, and was fonder of him than of the rest of his many children, and organized a wealthy marriage for him, marrying him at the age of fourteen to Anne Scott, the child heiress of the house of Buccleuch. Monmouth grew into a handsome man, with a charm that won many a girl's heart, including Lady Henrietta Wentworth's, but he also grew up vain, ambitious, headstrong, and foolish.

Monmouth always hoped that Charles would designate him his successor, and the accession of James II was a bitter disappointment. He had always been popular in the West of England, and in June 1685—only a few months after Charles's death—Monmouth left Holland, and, after a voyage of nineteen days, landed at Lyme Regis, convinced that the men of the West would flock to his blue banner. Some of them did, including Daniel Defoe, but altogether fewer than 5000 rallied to Lyme Regis, though there was wild enthusiasm in the little seaport itself. The young Duke's supporters included twenty-seven young ladies from TAUNTON, which he visited shortly after landing in Dorset. The twenty-seven young ladies, under the eye of their headmistress, Miss Blake, presented the Duke with a banner from the town, on which they had embroidered his colours. Miss Blake herself presented him with a sword and a Bible.

But even such talismans as these could not save Monmouth. There was no organization behind his army, which consisted mainly of farmers, unemployed clothing workers, and miners. But for some weeks the Duke had a triumphal tour, his supporters making up in enthusiasm

¹ See Chapter VI.

what they lacked in numbers. He began his "progress" at LONGLEAT,^{1*} just over the border in Wiltshire, owned by the cousin of his friend Sir Thomas Thynne, who had died in his arms after his murder at the instigation of Charles von Königsmarck.

From Longleat Monmouth rode into Somerset, through WHITE-LACKINGTON, where he and some 20,000 admirers had tea together under the famous chestnut-tree known ever after as Monmouth's Tree. It was blown down in 1897. From there he went on to BARRINGTON COURT,* near Ilminster, then the home of William Strode, and now the property of the National Trust. The old mansion fell into decay after Monmouth's time, but it has been beautifully restored, and is now once again a magnificent mansion. Both the house and the gardens are open to the public once a week.

Monmouth's success was more noisy than numerical, and within a month of his landing at Lyme Regis he and his army were routed at the Battle of Sedgemoor, fought near the village of Weston Zoyland. In command of the Royal troops was the elderly Earl of Faversham. Second in command was one of the ablest of all British soldiers, John Churchill.² And also serving in the Royal Army was Henry, Duke of Grafton,³ Monmouth's half-brother.

Monmouth himself was captured, hiding with one faithful companion, in disguise, in a ditch.

His followers were treated with great barbarity. Twelve local men were hanged summarily on the spot where he landed. Others, including the twenty-seven maidens from Taunton, were arraigned before Judge Jeffreys at the "Bloody Assizes."

The girls, flung into Dorchester gaol, were held to ransom for £7000, but eventually twenty-five of them were allowed to go on a joint payment of £2000, which was divided among the Queen's ladies-in-waiting. The two other girls did not live to share their freedom. One died in gaol, and the other died of terror after Judge Jeffreys' handling of her. A hundred of the rebels were given to the Queen, to sell as slaves in the West Indies to the highest bidder.

Altogether about 300 of Monmouth's men were killed in the Battle of Sedgemoor; 1000 more were killed during the pursuit. Some 800 were sold into slavery in the Barbadoes. Some 320 were hanged.

So there was, indeed, a sorry remnant left out of the young Duke's supporters. Out of an army of something under 5000, 3200 were killed or sold into slavery. Nor did Monmouth himself escape. He was sent to London on horseback with his hands tied behind him, tried and executed on Tower Hill, showing courage worthy of a Stuart (if Charles

¹ See Chapter II.

² See Chapter VIII.

³ See Chapters IV, and IX.

were his father) or a Sidney (if Robert were his father). Bishop Ken,¹ who tried to stop the blood-bath at the Assizes, attended Monmouth on the scaffold. His death was as ghastly as any of his followers'. As he took his place on the scaffold he directed one of his attendants to give the executioner six guineas if he cut off his head with one stroke. The suggestion so unnerved the executioner that Monmouth's head was literally hacked off by degrees, and the executioner himself had to be protected from the fury of the crowd.

Very close to Weston Zoyland, near where the Battle of Sedgemoor was fought, lies NETHER STOWEY, where COLERIDGE COTTAGE* stands. It was here that the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote much of his most famous poetry, including *The Ancient Mariner*, whom he sent off on his unpleasant voyage from the neighbouring seaport of WATCHET. Coleridge Cottage is now owned by the National Trust, and is open every day, including Sundays.

The same district is also associated with William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy, for, becoming great friends with Coleridge, they moved to the neighbouring village of ALFOXDEN, in 1797, to be near him. Dorothy Wordsworth described Coleridge as "thin and pale . . . with thick lips, not very good teeth," but his unattractive appearance was forgotten under the spell of his conversation. Wordsworth admired him greatly, saying afterwards, "The only wonderful man I ever knew was Coleridge." It was Wordsworth who suggested the shooting of the albatross which Coleridge describes so graphically in *The Ancient Mariner*.

Watchet is an ancient seaport, built amid blue cliffs, from which, perhaps, it derived its name, for "watchet" was at one time a well-known shade of blue. Charles I is said to have worn a waistcoat of watchet at his execution. Watchet was once the dwelling-place of a remarkable Saint, St Decuman. He had come from Wales, crossing the sea on his own cloak, and accompanied by a faithful cow, who made the journey entirely of her own free will, just to keep him supplied with fresh milk. After their safe arrival St Decuman built a shrine to God and a cell for himself in the hills behind Watchet. But he was killed by local people, who cut off his head and tossed it and his body into his little shrine. St Decuman, horrified at such desecration, picked up his head and washed it free of blood in a near-by stream. He then placed it neatly beside his body, and lay down, awaiting the arrival of his disciples. They found him with great grief, and buried him reverently on the site of the present church.

¹ See Chapter II, under Longleat.

On his way from Trent to Wincanton, Charles II passed to the north of SHERBORNE, for many years the home of the Elizabethan enigma Sir Walter Raleigh,¹ adventurer, poet, scientist—and a man capable of rousing intense hatred and jealousy in other men. He saw one of his enemies, Essex, lose his head on the scaffold. His other great enemy, Sir Robert Cecil, saw to it that Raleigh lost his.

The old castle at Sherborne, now nothing but a picturesque ruin, was built in the twelfth century. It was bought by Sir Walter, who began the building of the later castle. He designed this to be in the form of an H—in honour of young Prince Henry, James I's elder son, for there was a real affection between the boy and the adventurer. Raleigh completed only the central part of the building. The rest was added at various periods.

Walter Raleigh was a tall, well-built man, with thick black hair, and an infectious enjoyment of life, but his contemporaries found him difficult to understand, and his popularity fluctuated amazingly at different times of his life. He was one of Elizabeth's favourites—not one of her first favourites, for they were only Leicester and Essex, but enough of a favourite for her to be furious with him when he married one of the Throckmorton family, Bessie Throckmorton, whom he loved to his dying day. Elizabeth sent him to the Tower in disgrace—his first taste of the Tower he was to know so painfully well in later years.

After the Queen recovered her temper Raleigh was reinstated at Court, but Essex always plotted to keep him in the background. He was always furiously jealous of Raleigh, but Raleigh's real underground enemy was Sir Robert Cecil, the man who built HATFIELD HOUSE.^{2*}

Cecil was as jealous of Raleigh as Essex had been—and perhaps he was jealous of Raleigh's physical appearance, too, for Cecil was deformed and Raleigh a fine-looking man. Cecil corresponded with James before the King came to London, poisoning his mind against the unsuspecting Raleigh, whom he accused of supporting a plot to place Arabella Stuart on the throne.

Arabella³ was the troublesome grandchild of Bess of Hardwick,⁴ who had seized the opportunity of arranging a marriage between her daughter Elizabeth Cavendish and young Charles Stuart (Darnley's brother) when he and his mother were her guests on their way to Scotland. The unfortunate Arabella was the result of this marriage. To many people in England she was preferable to James, as she was English-born, but it is very unlikely that Raleigh supported her claim

¹ See Chapter IX.

³ See Chapter IX.

² See Chapter V.

⁴ See Chapter V.

in any way, for not only did he dislike her, but she was a Roman Catholic and he was not. Nevertheless Raleigh was arrested and tried on a charge of treason, the trial taking place at Winchester, as the Plague was sweeping London. At the opening of the trial the people were on the King's side, and pelted Raleigh with tobacco-pipes as he was taken to face his judges, but by the end of the trial he was a popular hero. The sudden recurring wave of popularity did him more harm than the tobacco-pipes, for it only increased James's hatred and fear.

Sir Edward Coke—the same Sir Edward of STROKE POGES¹ who had conducted the trial against Essex, and who, much later, conducted part of the trial against the Earl and Countess of Somerset—attacked Raleigh with the utmost ferocity, calling him a spider of hell, and most vile and execrable of traitors. Raleigh defended himself with skill and erudition, but, as the trial was a contrived one from the start, he was naturally found guilty. He was sentenced to death, but the sentence was held in abeyance, to be resurrected fifteen years later, when he returned from his abortive expedition to Guiana. James did not dare to let him free, however, and he was sent to the Tower for thirteen years.

Raleigh's estate of Sherborne, which he had beautified "with orchards, gardens, and groves, of much variety and delight," was snatched from him by James, and given to his weak and unpleasant favourite, the Robert Carr² who afterwards became the Earl of Somerset and one of the murderers of Sir Thomas Overbury.

There was one mitigating circumstance in Raleigh's long imprisonment. There were a number of remarkable men imprisoned in the Tower at the same time, including the ninth Earl of Northumberland, who was there for nearly sixteen years for his supposed participation in the Gunpowder Plot.³ He too had been a thorn in Cecil's flesh, and had not improved matters for himself by vigorously protesting (with his wife) against James's treatment of Raleigh. That his wife should add her protestations was perhaps surprising, for she was a sister of Raleigh's old enemy, Essex.

Raleigh was much distressed at the confiscation of his Sherborne estates. It is not surprising that his ghost is said to walk round the old pleasure gardens of the castle on Michaelmas Eve, and disappear in the Arbour, under Raleigh's Oak.

In Raleigh's time Sherborne stood in the centre of a cloth-making district famous after the eighteenth century for its silk. Long before that it was famous for linen and sailcloth. The making of cloth has

¹ See Chapter I.

² See Chapter VI.

³ See Chapters III, IV, and IX.

stopped there now, but glove-making is still flourishing, and gloves worn by Queen Mary at her Jubilee in 1935 were made in the district. Sherborne gave its name to Sherborn, Massachusetts.

Raleigh is also connected with SALISBURY, and Charles, who always admired resourceful and courageous men, perhaps remembered him with kindness as he skirted Salisbury and rode on towards Chichester.

Raleigh dawdled at Salisbury on his way back to London from Guiana, putting off as long as he could his interview with his unpleasant King. Raleigh pretended to be suffering from a dreadful skin disease, and said that he was too ill to eat. But food was smuggled to him from the famous White Hart Inn at Salisbury by his French doctor, thus prolonging for a while an already doomed life.

Three miles north of Mere is STOURHEAD HOUSE* and the villages of Stourton and Kilmington, all of which now belong to the National Trust. The estate is said to be the scene of several remarkable hair-raising haunts.

The Stourton family owned property here before the Conquest, but Henry Hoare, the banker, bought the estate in the eighteenth century, and built the present Stourhead House. But he has nothing to do with the hauntings. They are the responsibility of Charles, Lord Stourton, who murdered two of his neighbours, William and John Hartgill, after a bitter guerrilla feud that went on for years. If anyone was asking to be murdered it was the Hartgills, but they did meet a particularly unpleasant death.

When Charles's father died he discovered that the Hartgills had been systematically robbing his estate for many years, and that they were conducting a ruthless private war against their terrified neighbours. They stole their neighbours' pigs in such numbers that "they had more bacon and brawn in their house than the next three parishes could eat in one meal." William Hartgill, the father, had also, when acting as agent for Charles's father, destroyed title deeds to houses on the estate, and turned the real owners out. The Hartgills' quarrel with the neighbours grew more and more bitter, till at last a protest meeting was called. It was attended by retainers, landowners, and farmers, and after vowing vengeance a toast was drunk: "Gentlemen, the toast is the Hartgill family—left-handed!"—a sinister toast which meant that the meeting was drinking to the Hartgills' downfall.

Charles, Lord Stourton, put himself at the head of the Hartgills' opponents. He led various skirmishes against them, but always came off worst, and was finally sent to the Fleet Prison in London till he paid

a fine to the Hartgills of £2000. After he had raised the money, and returned home, he sent a horseman to the Hartgills, telling them to meet him at Kilmington Church. He awaited them in the near-by church house—with a hundred sympathizers. The Hartgills, though suspicious, approached the church and were roughly seized. After being left overnight in the church house they were taken to Lord Stourton's house, where they were beaten to death. They were secretly buried in the dungeon, a great dank cellar without steps or ventilation, into which the burial-party was let down by ropes. As Lord Stourton himself helped with the grim interment John's corpse cried out to him, "You will die in agony, as I have done!"

The prophecy came true.

Lord Stourton was hanged in the market-place in Salisbury in 1557. He was hanged with a silken rope instead of a hempen one, which "must needs have been a great consolation at such a melancholy moment."

Lord Stourton and his victims now haunt the church at Kilmington, and both fields and roads near Stourhead House. Sometimes Lord Stourton is seen on foot, sometimes riding a mettlesome horse followed by a wild "army" of followers in sixteenth-century costumes. They have been seen galloping madly along the roads to Kilmington, where they all disappear through the oak doors into the church.

The large Stourhead Estate was given to the National Trust by Sir Henry and Lady Hoare, who died within a few hours of each other in 1947, after living together at Stourhead House for fifty-three years.

Both the romantic Pleasure Gardens, with their lakes and temples, and the House are open to the public several times a week.

Old WARDOUR CASTLE, seven miles from Shaftesbury, had a long, romantic story which ended in glory and disaster during the Civil War. It was built in Richard II's reign, but came into the possession of the Arundells in 1547, and it and the manor have remained in their possession ever since. The old castle is now a stately ruin, but part of the battlemented walls and a tower still remain more or less intact. Beside them is growing a magnificent ironwood tree, planted, so legend says, by Cecilius Calvert, second Lord Baltimore, founder of the Colony of Maryland. And speaking of legends, there is a more eerie one, which says that the Arundells of Wardour are warned of an approaching death in the family by the appearance of two white owls perching on the manor.

The old castle was destroyed in two sieges during the Civil War, the first when it was besieged by Roundheads, and the second when it was

besieged by the third Lord Arundell, who eventually had himself to destroy part of it before he could recapture it.

The siege of the castle by the Roundheads was one of the most dramatic of the Civil War.

Thomas, second Lord Arundell, was away from home, serving with the King's troops at Oxford, but Lady Arundell, the brave and beautiful Lady Blanche, alone in the castle with twenty-five men, a handful of servants, her daughter-in-law, and two small grandsons, defied Sir Edward Hungerford (chief commander of the Roundheads in Wiltshire) and all his 1300 Roundheads for the best part of a week. Lady Blanche was some sixty years of age.

After a weary battle Hungerford "did spring two mines," doing "much to shake and indanger the whole Fabrick." The defendants were so exhausted with constant watching and fighting that their food dropped from their fingers before they could eat it. But they fought on, "the Maid-servants (valiant beyond their Sex)" helping "to load the Musquets."

After the Roundheads had brought petards to force a gate which would have given free access to the whole castle, and fireballs to toss through the windows, the besiegers offered "honourable terms" to Lady Blanche. She reluctantly agreed to surrender, her little army by that time being almost too exhausted to stand up.

Once the Roundheads were inside the castle, however, their "honourable terms" were forgotten. They sacked the castle wantonly, destroying the pictures and other treasures, smashing the carved woodwork with poleaxes. They let loose the herds of deer, destroyed the lakes, and sold the carp to astonished onlookers, "of two feet long for two-pence and three-pence apiece." Lady Blanche, her daughter-in-law, and the two little boys were sent as prisoners to Shaftesbury.

Lord Arundell died of wounds received when fighting for the King. His son Henry, third Lord Arundell, besieged the castle for a year, and was still unable to force an issue. Rather than leave the castle in enemy hands, he secretly mined it, and blew up much of it to regain possession.

The present castle was built towards the end of the eighteenth century.

Well to the south of Charles's ride from HEALE HOUSE, lies the NEW FOREST. It was 'new' in the time of William the Conqueror, for it was he who placed this enormous tract of land under the jurisdiction of Forest Law, with all its attendant cruelties.

It was not good land, but the severity of the penalties against poachers and anger against the King's action turned the Conqueror's act into an

outrage, and when two of his sons, Richard and William, and his grandson Richard were all killed in the forest people regarded it as a just visitation.

Young Richard, the illegitimate son of the Conqueror's eldest son, Robert, was the first casualty. He was killed while hunting in the New Forest, when a bolt from a cross-bow aimed at a stag hit him instead. A short time later his uncle Richard was also killed in the New Forest. He is said to have struck his jaw on the branch of a tree as he rode after the chase, jerking his head back and breaking his neck.

The people naturally took this second death as a portent, and looked for "signs" of more trouble to come. They found them, of course. A puddle of blood appeared in Berkshire; the Devil himself was seen by several people in different parts of the country; and a number of unholy births took place.

After all this no one could have been really surprised when William Rufus, the third of William's unregenerate sons, was also killed in the New Forest in the same year, 1100.

He was shot, at sunset, by Sir William Tyrrel when out hunting, but whether it was accident or design is another matter.

Whatever it was, a monument marks the spot at Stoney Cross, near Lyndhurst, on the Ringwood Road.

North of Charles's escape route through Southern Sussex stands one of the newest acquisitions to the National Trust, UPPARK,* near South Harting, presented to the Trust in March 1954 by Admiral Sir Herbert Meade-Featherstonhaugh and his son. Uppark is one of the most beautiful and least altered late seventeenth-century houses in Britain.

The lovely old home, which looks out across the South Downs, has associations with Emma Lyon, the blacksmith's daughter from Cheshire, who was taken there as a servant-girl by Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh long before she had any idea of becoming Emma Hamilton, or of being Lord Nelson's "dearest Emma," his "own dear wife in my eyes and in the eyes of Heaven." Legend says that she danced one night on the table in the dining-room at Uppark, and legend is probably true, for her new "protector," Charles Greville, had her taught dancing as well as singing and acting, and she was a delightful performer, and a beautiful one. Later Charles Greville, deep in debt, "ceded" Emma to his uncle, Sir William Hamilton, in exchange for the payments of his debts, and Emma, reluctant and resentful, went out to Naples to join Sir William. He married her five years later. Emma soon grew to love her life in Italy, and the prestige and power her position gave her. It was in Naples that she met Lord Nelson. Like many another man,

including the artist Romney, Nelson was enchanted by Emma Hamilton's beauty and high spirits. Their daughter Horatia was born in 1801. Many years later Sir Harry, then over seventy, married Mary Ann Bullock, his head dairymaid, sending her to Paris to be educated.

The present Uppark was built largely by Lord Grey of Werke, famous for being involved in two sensational scandals. He eloped with his wife's sister to Europe, returning as one of Monmouth's eighty-two followers to lead the cavalry (badly) at Sedgemoor. Though captured, Grey was released, rumour saying that he purchased his safety with a bribe of £40,000.

Two other famous people associated with Uppark are the Prince Regent and H. G. Wells, whose mother was housekeeper there.

Like most Sussex villages, South Harting once had its own witches. One of them was old Mother Digby, who had the power of turning herself into a hare. It is not surprising that wherever she went she was attended by a pack of dogs.

A more gentle story of a saint than the one associated with the Somerset seaport of Watchet is told of STEYNING, by which Charles II passed in the last stages of his flight from Worcester to the French port of Fécamp.

Steynning, now well inland, was once a port. King Alfred built a palace there, and by Edward the Confessor's time it was important enough to have a mint. Edward gave Steynning to the Abbey of Fécamp, in Normandy, but his successor, Harold, withdrew the gift, thereby giving William another excuse for an invasion. But a name that is remembered at Steynning more than Harold's or William's is that of the humble and loving St Cuthman.

St Cuthman had an old mother who was a cripple, and, rather than leave the old lady alone when he went to tend his sheep, he trundled her along with him in a wheelbarrow. If he had to leave his sheep unprotected at any time he would draw a circle around them, and in the Holy Name bid them stay within it, but most of the time he and his mother were there tending them in all weathers. But one day, as St Cuthman was pulling his mother's barrow along with a rope, the barrow rocked about so much on the rutted road that the rope broke. St Cuthman pulled some twigs off an elder-tree, and twisted them into a rough withy, and as he and his mother set off again, a "voice" told him to build a church where the withy broke.

The withy broke at Steynning, and the saint built a tiny wooden church on the site of the present one. As he was building it a beam shifted, entailing great labour, but as St Cuthman was struggling with

its weight a "stranger" appeared, who showed him how the beam should be placed aright. St Cuthman fell on his knees, and asked who the stranger was. "I am He in whose name thou buildest this temple," was the reply, and as St Cuthman gave praises and thanks the "stranger" disappeared.

Smuggling¹ was rife all along the coast, in Dorset as elsewhere, with WEST LULWORTH one of the many centres. Here a well-concealed cave half-way up the cliff-face made a fine natural hide-out for both smugglers and their goods, until it finally caved in. Boats were run close to shore, and kegs of brandy and other goods were hauled up by men who had been lowered by ropes from the cliff-top. There the booty could stay in perfect safety, till one night some innocent old cart lumbered by, stopped above the cave and picked up a "chance" load for delivery inland.

As in other coastal districts, most people had some connexion with the smuggling racket. One day excisemen called at a cottage suspected of hiding smuggled goods. When the owner opened the door, and the excisemen asked permission to search the house, the man replied, "Not to-day you can't. My wife is in bed with twins but a few hours old." The excisemen tactfully withdrew. Once they were out of earshot the man called out to his wife, "It's all right, Eliza," and Eliza went downstairs with her "twins"—two small kegs of brandy which she had taken to bed with her.

More interesting than the smugglers is the story that Napoleon once landed at LULWORTH COVE to investigate the possibility of a landing on the Dorset coast. A local farmer's wife, who had learnt French as a girl to help in her father's business, swore that she had seen Napoleon unroll a map and consider the coastline. She heard him discuss his problem with a companion, and, after inspecting the narrow entrance to the cove, end the discussion with an emphatic and disappointed, "Impossible!"

In spite of his close acquaintance with danger, and his many brushes with death, Charles II seems to have departed this world in peace. He haunts nobody. Nor are there as many stories as one might expect of his unhappy father, though he himself was not unacquainted with ghostly visitants. Once he was dead people surrounded the memory of Charles I with "omens" of ill-fortune. They remembered the ancient legend, dating from Merlin's day, that it was unlucky for a king to wear white for his Coronation, as Charles had done. They remembered how one of the wings had broken off the dove on the Sceptre, how the Royal Barge had stuck in the mud on the way from Whitehall, and how Queen

¹ See Chapter VI.

Henrietta Maria had refused to accompany the King to a Protestant Coronation service.

Charles had two remarkable experiences of ghosts during the Civil War, and perhaps the fate of his army would have been different if he had followed his own inclination—and taken one ghost's advice. He was stationed at DAVENTRY with his army of some 10,000 foot and horse, preparing to attack the Parliamentary troops, then at Northampton, when the ghost of his old friend, the silent, passionate Yorkshireman Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, appeared to him. The ghost urged the King to march north, maintaining with the greatest urgency that he would never conquer by force of arms alone. The King was deeply disturbed—all the more when Strafford returned the following night, repeating his warning with desperate emphasis. Charles would have followed the ghost's advice, but he was overruled by his Army leaders. So he stayed, and fought, and lost, the disastrous Battle of Naseby.

Charles had already heard a hair-raising ghost story, which began a couple of months after the battle which had opened the Civil War—the Battle of Edgehill, which was fought near Kineton, on Sunday, October 23, 1642. It was on a Sunday near Christmas that a number of shepherds and travellers, alarmed at the sound of battle, set out across the cold hills to investigate. They were horrified to see the whole battle being refought—by ghostly armies—with all the attendant noise of battle, the screaming of wounded horses, the groans of wounded men, the boom of the cannon, the roll of drums, and the blare of trumpets.

The onlookers were rooted to the ground with terror, and for three hours they watched the battle being waged with increasing bitterness, with the fortunes of war favouring first one side and then the other. They saw the Earl of Essex's infantry break through the King's ranks, and Prince Rupert and his Royalist cavalry turn the tide again in the King's favour. At last the Royalist troops literally flew off the field, leaving the Roundheads victorious and triumphant. Then they too vanished, and all the noise with them, leaving a frightening and deathly silence across the field of battle. (In fact, the result of Edgehill was a draw, the advantage, if any, resting with the King. But perhaps the Roundhead jubilation witnessed by the men was in anticipation of their ultimate triumph over the King.)

Charles soon came to hear of the ghostly battle, which was refought several Sundays running. He sent six officers from Oxford to interrogate the witnesses and to investigate the haunting, which they too witnessed, seeing the soldiers so vividly that they could recognize friends and acquaintances who had been killed in the fight.

Kineton people say that the Battle of Edgehill is still refought now and again, and that Prince Rupert and other Royalists have been seen riding their chargers through hedges and down the main street of Kineton itself.

After Charles had finally been defeated he was taken by his captors to RYDON, where he was lodged for two nights in comfort and with courtesy. In fact, he never forgot the hospitality he received there, and ever since, so they say, he has been seen from time to time haunting the rooms where he spent this brief captivity.

Near by was a house owned at the beginning of this century by an old woman who was a Royalist to her backbone.

There was one puzzling problem about her well-conducted house, where, of course, every one knew the story of the King's return. This problem was indeed a worrying one, for the old lady was constantly finding empty bottles in her well-stocked cellar. She questioned the servants, who supplied this explanation.

Whenever King Charles returned, said the servants, the rats in the cellar twisted their tails into corkscrews, extracted the corks with one deft turn, and presented the wine in brimming goblets to his ghostly majesty.

"Ah, well," exclaimed the old lady, quite content, "let me suffer a loss rather than be thought a rebel—and so add to the calamities of a murdered King. His Majesty is very welcome."

Ripon is interesting for many reasons, apart from the rats' courtesy to King Charles. Here the Watchman, wearing a tricorne hat and a frock coat, still blows three blasts on a large crescent-shaped horn every night, at the Market Cross and in front of the Mayor's residence. The custom is more than a thousand years old. The expenses of the Watchman, who was once responsible for the welfare of the town, were formerly met by a 2d. or 4d. tax on every householder, according to whether he had only one door or a "gate door and a back door."

The horn used nowadays is about a hundred years old, the ancient horn being preserved in the Town Hall. The 'new' one is an ox-horn, thirty inches long, covered with purple velvet and enriched with silver bands.

Ripon in Wisconsin, U.S.A., has the same ancient motto as Ripon in Yorkshire: "Except ye Lord keep ye cittie, ye Wakeman waketh in vain."

There is another Royalist link at WATH, near Ripon. Sir Richard Graham rode home to Wath after the Battle of Marston Moor, pierced with twenty-six wounds. His horse carried him up to his room, where he died within the hour. Marks still on the staircase of the old house are said to be the imprint of the horse's shoes.

VIII

Legends—and the Churchills

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

After a brief meeting once again with

CHARLES II and his fiery mistress,

BARBARA CASTLEMAINE, we meet her lover and kinsman, the young and handsome

JOHN CHURCHILL, later first Duke of Marlborough, son of the impoverished Royalist

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL, and younger brother of a lively girl with "limbs" of great beauty,

ARABELLA CHURCHILL. In order to ease her father's poverty, Arabella had been appointed a maid-of-honour to

ANNE HYDE, Duchess of York, and for many years Arabella was one of the favourite mistresses of the Duchess's husband,

JAMES, later James II. His daughter

ANNE, later Queen Anne, harboured a sentimental passion for the domineering, yellow-haired

SARAH JENNINGS, who as a fifteen-year-old, newly introduced to Court, had captivated, and shortly afterwards married, John Churchill.

After his succession of victories against the French, John Churchill, now the Duke of Marlborough, was given the old Palace of Woodstock, long famous for its association with

FAIR ROSAMOND, the beautiful young mistress of

HENRY II. One of their sons (probably their only one) was

WILLIAM LONGESPÉE, who afterwards married

ELA, COUNTESS OF SALISBURY in her own right, who, as a small girl, had been carried off to Normandy and discovered, after a two years' search, by a courtier disguised as a troubadour. After William's death Ela founded LACOCK ABBEY.*

The Duchess of Marlborough had the old Palace of Woodstock pulled down when BLENHEIM* was built.

The next notability in the Churchill family was

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL, the best platform speaker of his day, a man of meteoric career. His son was

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL, soldier, writer, orator, great Prime Minister of the Second World War.

Edgar Holloway

• Croglin
• Edenhall
• Grayrigg
• Kendal
• Warton
Sizergh Castle
Lacock Abbey
Woodstock
Aynho Palace
Sandridge
Minster Lovell
Lacock Abbey
Chartwell
Lullingstone Castle
Quebec House
Wootton Bassett
Aynho Park

Open to the public

🔑 *Open to the public*

VIII

During one of the periodic quarrels between Charles II and Barbara Castlemaine, Charles consoled himself with the little French girl, Louise de K  roualle, who had come over to England in the train of his dearly loved sister, "Minette." "Minette" had died shortly after her return to France, and when the Queen offered to make Louise a maid-of-honour Charles welcomed her, perhaps all the more because she was a link between himself and his so much adored younger sister.

Louise was a charming little creature, with a sweet, childish face and a love of beauty that Charles found irresistible. Louise retreated from his advances for a while, but as she began to retreat less and less the Earl and Countess of Arlington invited her to Eusron,¹ their Suffolk home, where she was bedded with Charles and the stocking flung—much to the fury of Barbara. Nine months later Louise became the mother of Charles Lennox. By then she was the Duchess of Portsmouth, and, much to Barbara's increased fury and alarm, her son was created Duke of Richmond before any of her own sons were so honoured.

Barbara, in retaliation, took as a lover a connexion of her own—the handsome but impecunious John Churchill, a young man of casual charm and unruffled calm. He was then only an ensign, with long curled locks and a fresh complexion, and but a few years previously had been no more than a slim young page in the service of Charles's brother, James, Duke of York. His sister Arabella was already the Duke's mistress.

Barbara's *affaire* with young Churchill soon became notorious. There is a story that the Duke of Buckingham showed Charles some of Barbara's letters to her young lover. Charles, in a rage, stormed over to Barbara's house, found her in bed, and the window swinging open. He caught a glimpse of Churchill as he sped across the garden away from the King's wrath.

"I saw your face," cried the King to the retreating figure, "but I forgive you. You do it for your bread!"

It was well known that Barbara supplied her impoverished young kinsman with money. At one time she gave him £5000.

¹ See Chapter VI.

Churchill invested it with characteristic care and shrewdness. He handed it over in return for an annuity of £500. As he did not die till he was seventy-two, it was an investment that could hardly have been bettered.

Charles and Barbara made up this quarrel. It was an expensive quarrel for Charles, who had to give Barbara the Tudor estate of Nonsuch House¹ before he could persuade her to forgive him.

John Churchill and his older sister, Arabella, were the children of Sir Winston Churchill. He had married Elizabeth Drake, whose father was a descendant of the great Elizabethan sailor Sir Francis Drake,² and whose mother was a descendant of the Villiers family. Her mother was sister to George Villiers,³ first Duke of Buckingham, Charles I's favourite who was murdered in Portsmouth.

Sir Winston, who was born at Wootton Glanville, near Sherborne, in 1620, was, like his descendant, another Sir Winston, a soldier, a writer, and a Member of Parliament. He was a passionate Royalist, and fought as a captain of the horse during the Civil War. Afterwards he had to be hidden from the vengeance of the Roundheads by his father-in-law, Sir John Drake, at his seat in Devonshire. Sir Winston's property was sequestered, but it was restored to him when he was knighted at the Restoration. He had, however, ruined himself for the Royal cause.

He emblazoned on his coat-of-arms "Faithful but Unfortunate," and to help make amends for his poverty his daughter Arabella, a girl famed for her lovely figure, was offered a position as maid-of-honour to the Duchess of York. Her family were delighted, for a post at Court could lead to much. In Arabella's case it certainly did. She had several children by James, and was able to help her fifteen-year-old brother, John, by procuring for him a position as page when he left school. When asked in later years why John Churchill had done nothing "to prevent the infamy of his sister," John's wife, Sarah, replied, "She had at least two or three Bastards by the Duke of York or others, when her Brother was whipt at St Paul's School for not reading his Book," adding, reasonably enough, what could a "Boy at School" do in such a matter?

James fell in love with Arabella by accident, or, at any rate, through an accident.

The Duchess of York had asked to attend a greyhound coursing match near York. Arabella, one of the maids-of-honour in

¹ See Chapter V.

² See Chapter VI.

³ See Chapter I.

attendance, was riding a high-spirited horse which she was quite incapable of handling, for she was a very poor rider. James rode over to remonstrate with her "for sitting so ill on horseback." But suddenly her horse bolted across the fields. Arabella was thrown, and as she lay on the grass the whole loveliness of her figure was displayed. The courtiers "could hardly believe that limbs of such beauty could belong to Mistress Churchill's face." James was "inflamed by the spectacle of beauty in distress and also in disarray," and their association began almost immediately. Arabella remained the Duke of York's mistress for many years. Four of her children by him grew to maturity, the most outstanding being James Fitzjames, Duke of Berwick, who became one of the ablest generals in Europe, and a Marshal of France.

During this time Sir Winston Churchill was busy writing a book remarkable for its length and dullness—*Divi Britannici*, an enormous work dealing with the Divine Right of Kings and the lives of the English sovereigns. He dedicated it to Charles II. It was published in 1675, when John Churchill was a man of twenty-five.

A few years later, when the Duke of Monmouth¹ landed at Lyme Regis and began collecting an army in the West Country, Churchill was appointed second-in-command of the Royal army which put him to flight at Sedgemoor. He was already showing his great capabilities as a soldier, his gift for handling men, and his gift for taking infinite pains in organization. But Churchill, though no worse than many of his period, always had an eye to the main chance. He supported James just as long as it promised to pay good dividends. When William of Orange prepared to invade England, James was warned that Churchill was likely to desert. The King refused to believe the story. Nevertheless, as James advanced across the Wiltshire plains and a battle seemed imminent, Churchill slipped out of the camp during the night to join William. He had already made up his mind to desert James three months previously.

James has always been something of an enigma. He was a man of ability, but of no judgment; a man of determination, but of no humanity; a gloomy man (he was even a gloomy lover), entirely lacking the charm of his brother Charles. He was never a carefree boon companion, though he loved hunting, and was the first aristocrat to enjoy fox-hunting. Before his time fox-hunting was a pastime reserved for yeomen. Stags and hares were the quarry

¹ See Chapter VII.

for the nobility. But James altered all that, and was perhaps at his happiest when hunting in one of the royal forests.

James shared one characteristic with his brother. He was very susceptible to women, and loved a wide variety of them. Arabella Churchill shared the honour of being his best-known mistress with Catherine Sedley,¹ but he dallied with several others, including the same Frances Stuart² whom Charles loved and declared had the most beautiful legs in the world. In that James did not agree. He considered them too slender. He preferred legs that were short, plump—and clothed in a green stocking. Nevertheless James loved her, as Pepys said, “desperately.”

By this time James had been married for some years. His wife was Anne Hyde, daughter of Sir Edward Hyde, the Earl of Clarendon who, at the Restoration, was given the ruins of KENILWORTH CASTLE³* and the manor of CORNBURY PARK.* Hyde had followed Charles to France, and shared his long exile in the greatest poverty and hardship. His property was sequestered, and his wife, who stayed in England with her small children, was almost as hungry as Charles’s exiled courtiers.

“Be of good cheer,” Sir Edward wrote to her, “and keep up the spirits of thy company, and be as merry as poor, honest, undone people can be.”

Lady Hyde was a woman of no family. In fact, Cardinal York declared that she was a “tub woman”—a drawer of beer at a public house—and her lowly origin was one of the causes of the ill-feeling that finally brought about Clarendon’s downfall. But long before that happened—in fact, some four years before the Restoration—their daughter Anne Hyde was installed as an attendant on the Princess of Orange, James’s sister Mary. Anne was a plain girl, like her mother. James never had much of an eye for beauty in women, and Charles once teased him that his mistresses must have been assigned to him by his confessor as a penance. But if Anne was plain she was lively and pleasant, and she and James entered into some private contract in Breda which, on their return to England after the Restoration, Charles insisted should be honoured.

They were married at dead of night in London in 1660. From then till Anne died she enjoyed, or endured, eleven crowded years. She saw the rise and fall of various ducal mistresses, survived the Great Plague and the Great Fire, watched the fall and

¹ See Chapter IX.

³ See Chapter V.

² See Chapter I, and Chapter VI, under Audley End and Euston.

banishment of her old father, and bore eight children. But one after another her children died, and out of the eight only Mary and Anne grew to maturity.

Anne, the mother, died when she was only thirty-four, but both Mary and Anne became Queens of England.

Mary had been married as a young girl to the dour Prince William of Orange. After William's victory against James she returned to England as joint sovereign with her husband, who declined to be merely Prince Consort.

William was naturally delighted to welcome Churchill to his ranks. He created him Earl of Marlborough, but he could not bring himself to trust entirely a man who had already betrayed one master. In that he showed good sense, for no sooner had Marlborough helped William to the throne than he began corresponding with the King he had helped to depose. The usually silent William was so angry that he declared, "Were I and my Lord Marlborough private persons, the sword would have to settle between us!" But no duel was permissible. Marlborough was sent to the Tower, and his countess, the great Sarah, was dismissed from Anne's side at St James's Palace.

Marlborough's imprisonment was short, and he and his wife soon continued their very close friendship with the fat Princess Anne and her colourless and incredibly dull husband, Prince George of Denmark. So close was their friendship that Princess Anne suggested that they should drop all titles for the sake of an even closer relationship. She and her husband became "Mr and Mrs Morley," the Duke and Duchess "Mr and Mrs Freeman."

Princess Anne was weak-willed, obstinate, and greedy, and, as for Prince George, Charles II said of him, "I have tried him drunk and I have tried him sober, but there is nothing in him."

Marlborough's redoubtable wife, Sarah Jennings, was ten years younger than her husband. She was probably born at WATEREND HALL, at Sandridge, Hertfordshire, in 1660. Her father died when she was eight, and as her mother spent most of her time at Court, where she was busy launching an elder daughter, "La Belle Jennings," young Sarah spent a lonely and neglected childhood, uneducated and undisciplined. "La Belle Jennings" was given a post as maid-of-honour to Anne Hyde, Duchess of York, but Sarah was left to her own devices.

In later years she said, "Don't talk to me of books! I only know cards and men."

Sarah Jennings followed her sister to Court when she was twelve. By this time she too was promising to be a beauty, albeit a penniless one, and, much as Churchill loved money, he was willing to forgo the chance of a wealthy marriage to pursue this violent-tempered, passionate creature.

She was only fifteen when he first met and loved her. He loved her to his dying day. His letters to her were always love-letters.

As soon as the doubting William died the Marlboroughs began to put pressure on Queen Anne. On the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1702 the Earl was created Duke of Marlborough, and, though his only son died of smallpox about the same time, Marlborough's wealth was steadily increasing, and that was something. Anne herself gave him £5,000 a year.

For nine years after the outbreak of the war Marlborough set out every spring for the Continent with his small expeditionary force, and year after year he scored one bloody victory after another—Blenheim—Ramillies—Oudenarde—Malplaquet. He was a master of the art of war. He never besieged a fortress he did not capture. He never fought a battle he did not win. The Battle of Blenheim was fought in 1704, and, though the war dragged on till 1713, it was his victory at Blenheim that caught the imagination of the English.

In an ecstasy of gratitude Queen Anne gave Marlborough the whole rights to the royal manor of Woodstock, and some 15,000 acres of land. Parliament voted him an enormous sum of money to build a new mansion, and the Marlboroughs called in the playwright-architect Sir John Vanbrugh to build *BLenheim PALACE*.*

The manor of Woodstock had been associated with kings since the earliest times.

Alfred the Great had been staying there, in the heart of the great solitude of the forest, when he translated Boethius' *Consolations of Philosophy*.

Henry I added a zoo, importing a lion, a lynx, and the first porcupine ever seen in England. He also built, or rebuilt, a hunting-lodge.

But Woodstock is chiefly remembered for its association with the tireless, red-headed, hot-tempered Henry II and his mistress, Fair Rosamond, daughter of Walter de Clifford, for whom he built a secret retreat or bower described as "a howse wrought lyke unto a knot in a garden called a *maze*."

Henry had first seen Rosamond at Godstow Nunnery, when

she was about fifteen, and he still a young man. Rosamond had been sent to the nunnery for education, and the King probably courted her there as well as in their secret bower, where they could be safe from his jealous wife, Eleanor.

Eleanor was a woman to be reckoned with.

During her previous marriage, to Louis VII of France, she disrupted one of the Crusades by insisting on accompanying Louis with a crowd of attendant ladies and mountains of encumbering luggage. Eleanor and the other ladies had amused themselves by sending spindles and distaffs (the medieval equivalent of white feathers) to any man who refused to join the Crusade.

Eleanor soon tired of Louis, whom she complained was more monk than king. Their marriage was annulled, and two months later, after a fiery and passionate wooing, she married Henry. He was nineteen, she was twenty-seven.

After the birth of their sons Eleanor grew tired of Henry too. She went her own sweet way; Henry went his. He spent much of his time at Woodstock. There one of his fierce quarrels with Thomas à Becket took place; but there, too, he made love to the Fair Rosamond in the bower which he had devised for their privacy and delight.

A persistent legend says that Rosamond bore Henry two sons—William Longespée and Geoffrey, who became Bishop of Lincoln, and later, Archbishop of York. But, as Geoffrey was already Bishop of Lincoln about the time that William was born, his mother was probably not Rosamond.

Later William Longespée's half-brother, Richard I, arranged his marriage to Ela, Countess of Salisbury in her own right, and founder of LACOCK ABBEY.*

Legend has woven an impenetrable cocoon round Rosamond, and fact and fiction can no longer be separated with complete certainty. All stories of her death agree that it was caused by Queen Eleanor. The earliest stories say that the Queen had her bled to death in a bath at Woodstock. There is no mention of the poison, the dagger, or the maze, which figure in later legends of Rosamond's death. Some legends say that the Queen discovered her rival standing at the entrance to the maze. Rosamond turned and fled as the Queen approached, and in her haste dropped a ball of silk, which unwound itself behind her as she sped along the secret labyrinthian way. The Queen, following the "clewe of threde or sylke," "delte with her in such maner that she lyved not long after." Another story, obviously a variation on the same

theme, says that the "Queene found hir out by a silken thridde, which the King had drawne after him out of hir chamber with his foote, and dealt with her in such sharpe and cruell wise that she lived not long after."

In these later stories the Queen is supposed to have stabbed Rosamond, or to have forced her to drink poison. Alas, all the stories are more than merely unlikely. They are impossible.

While Henry, a man of terrifying energy, was doing his best to clean up the chaos he had inherited from Stephen, Eleanor went off to her own province of Aquitaine. She inspired her son Henry to rebel against his father, and when the rebellion collapsed escaped into the French King's territory disguised as a nun. She spent the next fifteen years in honourable confinement, and she was still a well-guarded prisoner when the Fair Rosamond died, probably quite peacefully, at Godstow Nunnery.

The nunnery had been richly endowed by Henry II on account of its association with his Fair Rosamond. The nuns there were allowed a considerable freedom, and were even given permission to visit Godstow Fair. It may have been on one of these excursions that Henry first saw Rosamond. On her death her body was buried in the church there, but it did not lie in peace for many years. In 1191 Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, when visiting the "Abbey of the Nunnes," inquired about "a tombe in the middle of the quire, covered with a pall of silke, and set about with lights of waxe." He was told that the tomb was that of Fair Rosamond, "sometime lemman of Henry II, who for love of her, had done much good to that church." "Then," quoth the horrified Bishop, "take out of this place this harlot, and bury her without the church!" So Rosamond was reburied in the Nuns' Chapter House, but at the Reformation her bones were taken up and her tomb destroyed. After that Rosamond is said to have haunted "Fair Rosamond's Well," near the lake in Godstow Park.

At the Dissolution of the Monasteries Henry VIII gave the nunnery to his physician. Part of it was still habitable at the time of the Civil War, when it was garrisoned for the King. Not long afterwards it was destroyed by fire.

Many kings who followed Henry II shared his love for Woodstock. One of them was Edward III, and when he was seventeen, his son Edward, known as the Black Prince, was born there.

James I, however, preferred to stay with the Lee family at DITCHLEY, in Oxfordshire, which was more accessible than Woodstock. From there he enjoyed the hunting in Wychwood Forest,

the forest where the ghost of Amy Robsart had, some years previously, appeared to her husband, the Earl of Leicester,¹ warning him of his approaching death.

Woodstock was garrisoned for the King during the Civil War, but during the Commonwealth it was partially demolished. Parts of it remained habitable, however, and Parliament sent seven commissioners to superintend matters at the old manor. No sooner were they installed than the townsfolk decided to get rid of them. They devised a series of "Apparitions, Frights and Punishments" to scare away the unpopular newcomers. They snuffed out lights, threw crockery, tipped the beds, and generally behaved like inspired poltergeists. They won. Scared almost out of their wits, the seven commissioners fled!

After the Restoration both Charles II and his brother often stayed there.

Charles gave the office of Comptroller of Woodstock to his friend John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester. Rochester, who had been born at Ditchley, became a favourite at Court through his good looks and wit. Charles appointed him a Gentleman-of-the-Bed-chamber. That did not prevent Rochester satirizing the King unmercifully, and he scribbled on the door of Charles's bedroom:

Here lies our sovereign lord the King,
Whose word no man relies on.
He never says a foolish thing,
Nor ever does a wise one.

William III considered Woodstock too dilapidated to use, and when Anne gave it to the Marlboroughs, Sarah, with little regard for its ancient heritage and tradition, had it demolished. Sir John Vanbrugh stayed there for three years while he was building Blenheim, but he could not persuade the Duchess to retain the old building, and he was the last resident of this old manor of all the kings.

Anyone who employed Vanbrugh was sure to run up large bills, for he thought in terms of vast colonnades and sweeping magnificence. If the dining-rooms were half a day's walk from the kitchens, what did it matter, so long as the splendour was there? The foundation-stone was laid in 1705, but quarrels soon broke out between Vanbrugh and Sarah. At first the building and the quarrelling went on side by side, but in 1712 Sarah dismissed Vanbrugh, and Blenheim was left, neglected and unfinished. It was still unfinished when the Duke of Marlborough died in 1722,

¹ See Chapter V.

when Vanbrugh died in 1726, and the Duchess was still adding and subtracting bits when she died in 1744.

In spite of Sarah's violent tempers, her vindictiveness, and her everlasting quarrels, Marlborough loved her passionately, always.

She quarrelled so violently with the adoring Queen Anne that their former close friendship turned to hatred. Sarah was dismissed from her post as Mistress of the Robes, her place being taken by Lady Elizabeth Percy (then the Duchess of Somerset), of PERWORTH.¹* Sarah and the Duke retired to the Continent, and did not return to England till Anne's death.

But nothing Sarah did could ruffle the Duke's calm—at any rate, his outward calm—no sudden jealousies, no tantrums, no unreasonable whims, could alter his unswerving love for her.

In after-years the Duchess used to relate how, to anger her husband, she had cut off the beautiful golden ringlets that he loved so much. She laid her hair, full length, in an antechamber, where he could not fail to see it.

Then, well satisfied with her revenge, Sarah sat down to wait.

The Duke came in, went through the anteroom, came out again—and said nothing. After he had gone the exasperated Duchess went to see what had happened. Her lovely hair had gone.

For once the Duchess was defeated. The Duke never referred to the incident; the Duchess did not dare to. But years later, when the Duke died, the Duchess found her hair wrapped up—and tenderly cherished among the Duke's most sacred possessions.

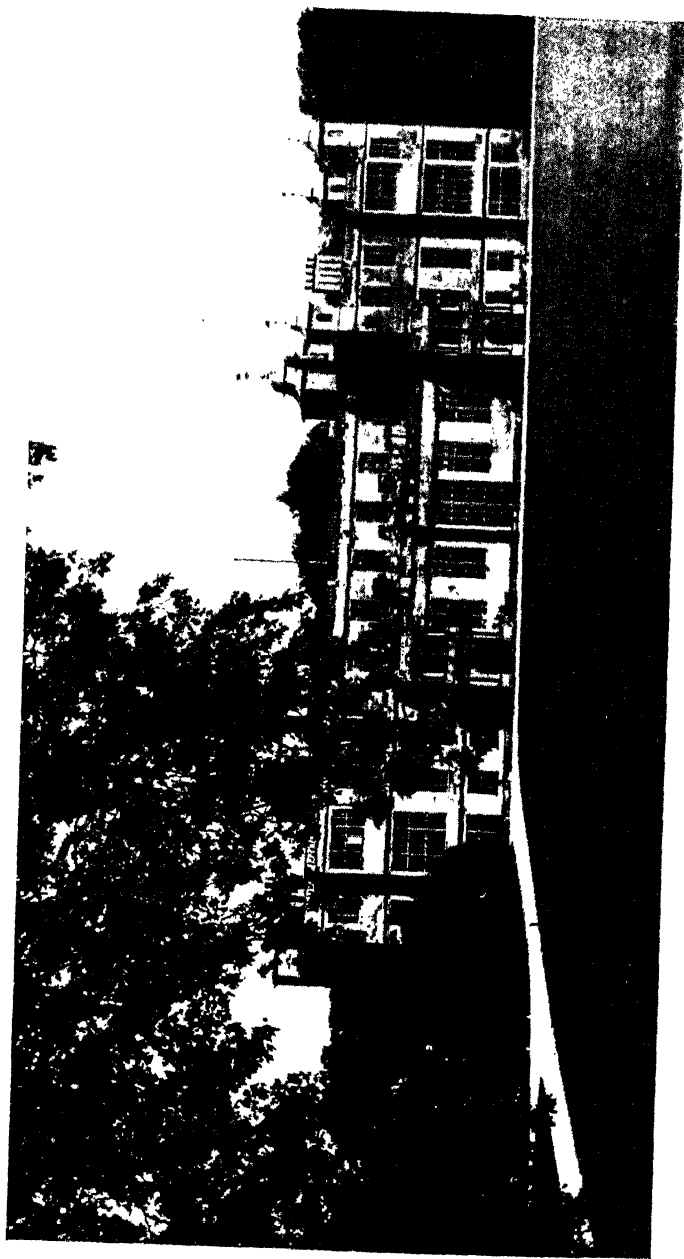
In her own uncomfortable way the Duchess returned the Duke's affection. When she was a widow of sixty-two, and he a widower too, the wealthy "proud" Duke of Somerset proposed to Sarah.

She shook her head, and replied, "If I were young and handsome as I was, instead of old and faded as I am, and you could lay the empire of the world at my feet, you should never share the heart and hand that once belonged to John, Duke of Marlborough."

For a hundred years or more all was quiet on the Churchill front. The next notability in the family appeared in Queen Victoria's reign. He was Lord Randolph Churchill, third son of the seventh Duke of Marlborough.

Lord Randolph was a spectacular man, brilliant, dynamic, the best platform orator of his day—and impulsive. For instance, in

¹ See Chapter II.



AUDLEY END
Photo British Travel Association
[1950-51]



KNOLE HOUSE

Photo British Travel Association

[p. 209]



PENSHURST PLACE

Photo British Travel Association

1873, when he was visiting Cowes, he met a beautiful nineteen-year-old American girl, Jeanette Jerome. He fell in love with her on the spot. Within forty-eight hours he had proposed and had been accepted. It was only afterwards that he found out anything about her father, Leonard Jerome, a New Yorker who during the American Civil War had owned and edited the *New York Times*.

Neither family was pleased at the precipitate betrothal, but after Lord Randolph had won the Woodstock seat for the Tories the young couple were allowed to marry, and Lady Randolph soon became one of the most popular members of Society.

Not very long afterwards, however, Lord Randolph incurred the serious displeasure of the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII. Lord Randolph had taken his brother's part in a quarrel involving his brother, the Prince, and a lady. The Prince declared he would visit no house that welcomed Lord Randolph—and overnight Society doors were closed against the young politician and his beautiful young wife.

In his study of his father Sir Winston Churchill wrote that the "deep displeasure" which Lord Randolph encountered at this time changed his genial gaiety for "a stern and bitter quality . . ."

During his enforced absence from London Society—a "banishment" that lasted some eight years—Lord Randolph developed a taste for politics. He entered the lists with cold and unconquerable determination to oust Mr Gladstone from the Premiership, and his house became the meeting-place for all shades of politicians. His young son Winston listened to all the discussions with avid interest, and with immense pride in his father. He kept a scrap-book of all his speeches, and even drew the line at friendship with some of his young acquaintances if their fathers were on the wrong side!

With the help of Lord Randolph's blistering speeches and bulldozing energy, the Tories returned to power. Lord Randolph became leader of the House of Commons and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

But six months later his career was at an end.

To gain a point Lord Randolph threatened to resign. The Prime Minister unexpectedly accepted his resignation—and the glory was gone. He died eight years later, only forty-five years of age.

His son Winston was twenty.

Blenheim Palace was never Sir Winston's home, for his father was merely the third son of the Duke, but he did manage to be

born there—much to his satisfaction. His beautiful young mother was gay and lively and loved dancing, and, in spite of her doctor's warning, she insisted on attending a ball at Blenheim Palace on November 30, 1874. The baby's expected birth was still two months away, but during the evening Lady Randolph became ill. She was rushed to a small but handy bedroom—and there gave birth to Winston.

Sir Winston himself once said, "At Blenheim I took two very important decisions: to be born and to marry" (for he proposed in the grounds). "I am happily contented," he added, "with the decisions I took on both occasions."

He grew into a red-haired, pugnacious, and talkative child—"the naughtiest small boy in the world," one despairing teacher declared. During his small-boyhood, though he did not live at Blenheim, he spent many of his school holidays there with his uncle, and he became steeped in the atmosphere of the old Palace, and in the stories of John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough. With lead soldiers—thousands of them—he refought his ancestor's bloody campaigns, pressing his young cousins into acting as supporting or opposing generals in all his battles. His mother had two sisters, both of whom married British subjects, and his cousins included Shane Leslie, later to become the distinguished Irish playwright, and Clare Sheridan, afterwards the distinguished sculptress.

With Blenheim as part of young Winston's background, John Churchill grew into another of his idols, sharing the highest and most sacred place with the meteoric Lord Randolph.

Winston was never a success at school. He was considered bumptious, opinionated, and pugnacious, and Harrow did not suit his temperament much better than his first school, where, with other small boys, he was beaten often and hard. At Harrow his progress was almost unnoticeable. What he was not interested in he could not—or would not—learn. But even his astounded headmaster, Dr Welldon (astounded at the regularity with which Winston remained bottom of the class), declared that he had never come across "in a boy of fourteen such a veneration of the English language."

He shone neither at work nor at games, his only athletic achievement being to win the Public Schools Fencing Championship.

Eventually, at the third attempt, Winston Churchill managed to enter Sandhurst, where he joined the cavalry. In this atmosphere

of horses (which he loved) and great activity, and practical instruction in subjects dear to his heart, Winston began to "find himself," and shortly after his father's death he was delighted to be gazetted to the 4th Queen's Own Hussars.

His first taste of war—and war corresponding—occurred during his first long leave from the Army, when he received permission to go to Cuba. A small rebellion was in progress there, and Winston joined the Spanish Army. As a "war" it was quite indecisive, for the Cubans were past masters at guerrilla fighting, and nothing sensational happened. But Winston had his baptism of fire on his twenty-first birthday, sold his first dispatches to the *Graphic* at £5 apiece, and returned to England with a taste for Havana cigars—and the Spanish siesta.

Many years of adventure—of deliberately seeking adventure—followed this baptism of fire in Cuba. He had adventures in India; more in South Africa, where he escaped from the Boers with the price of £25 on his head, dead or alive.

The young soldier and war correspondent returned to England in a blaze of glory, and to the strains of "See the Conquering Hero Comes." He stood as a Conservative candidate for Oldham. He had been defeated there in 1899. In 1900 he was returned.

His Parliamentary career had begun. He was still slim, freckled, and pugnacious. Eight years later came another great event in Winston Churchill's life. When he was contesting Dundee he met the twenty-five-year-old Clementine Hozier, daughter of Colonel H. M. and Lady Blanche Hozier, and granddaughter of the Earl and Countess of Airlie. Clementine was beautiful, high-spirited, amusing—and extraordinarily interested in politics. For Winston it was love at first sight. It was a marriage that turned out to be "one of the great marriages of the century."

Winston Churchill's political career was an unequal see-saw. He was more often 'down' than 'up.' But never a moment of his political 'recession' was wasted. He filled it with writing, painting, bricklaying, revelling in political talk with such men as F. E. Smith (Lord Birkenhead), Lord Beaverbrook, and Lloyd George, and by playing in the garden at CHARTWELL, Westerham, Kent, with his four children. He became as wet as they when he showed them how to dam the lake to make miniature waterfalls, and he created a bond with them that he was never able to achieve with his own father. As well as all these interests, he cultivated goldfish and geese. Inevitably one of the geese found its way to the dinner-table. Churchill took one look at it.

"You carve him, Clemmy," he said. "He was a friend of mine."

Churchill always relished and thrived on responsibility, for he was convinced that he had been born for a special purpose. He was right—for on the outbreak of the Second World War party jealousies and hatreds were forgotten overnight. Every one knew instinctively that Churchill was the man for the tremendous task ahead. He symbolized the fierce, fighting spirit of liberty. He was Everyman, inspiring the free people of the world with his simple, moving words, whether they were words of warning: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat," or whether they were words of humble thanksgiving: "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

He made coherent every free man's deep but incoherent defiance: "We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing-grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

By this time Churchill was more than a mere symbol of defiance.

He had become a legend.

SINCE THEN

When Queen Anne made her gift of Woodstock Manor and the thousands of acres surrounding it to the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough it was directed, by way of tenure, that, in the anniversary of the Battle of Blenheim, "in every year, for ever, the inheritors of his grace's honours and titles, should render at Windsor to Her Majesty, her heirs and successors, one standard of colours, with three fleur-de-lis painted thereon, as an acquittance of all manner of rents, suits and services due to the crown."

Queen Anne was sitting in her apartments at Windsor Castle when she was told of the victory of the Duke of Marlborough at the Battle of Blenheim, and every year since the death of the first Duke of Marlborough his descendant has taken to Windsor a new copy of the old white Bourbon flag—now known as the Blenheim Standard.

A replica of the Standard sent every year to Windsor is hanging by the door of the First State Room at *BLenheim*.*

A bust of the Duke of Marlborough stands in the Queen's Guard Chamber at Windsor Castle, The Standard is hung above it. At the end of every year the flag is taken away to make room for the new one.

As the first Duke's son, the Marquis of Blandford, died before he did, the Duke was succeeded first by his daughter Henrietta and then by Henrietta's nephew Charles Spencer, son of her younger sister Anne.

Blenheim still belongs to the Duke of Marlborough, but it is open to the public several days a week. The greater part of the interior is magnificent, but one small and undistinguished bedroom always attracts a great deal of attention. It is the small, plain room in which Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill elected to be born on the night of the ball, November 30, 1874.

Blenheim is famous for its tapestries and its paintings, as well as for its magnificence, so typified in the immense Saloon, with its wall and ceiling paintings. The tapestries include the Green Writing-room's tapestry of the Battle of Blenheim, showing the surrender of the commander of the French forces to Marlborough, who is mounted on his white charger. The portraits include those of three of the principal characters in this chapter.

Near the Blenheim Tapestry in the Green Writing-room is Kneller's portrait of the first Duke, while the portrait of his turbulent wife, by the same artist, is hanging in the Green Drawing-room. Also in this room is the Lely portrait of Arabella, who is painted not with her famous brother John, but with one of her other brothers, Winston.

Sir Winston Churchill bought CHARTWELL, in Westerham, Kent, with the profits from his book *The World Crisis*, which netted him something like £20,000. Long before that, of course, he had made his name as a writer when he published *The River War*, shortly after his service in India. It was hailed as a brilliant military history, and was one of the first of a long list of amazing successes.

The Churchill family had lived at the old manor of Lullenden, not very far away, before Sir Winston purchased Chartwell. This had once been called Atwell, after the family who originally built it during the reign of Edward III.

After the Second World War admirers of Sir Winston and Lady Churchill bought Chartwell manor and grounds, and in 1946 handed them over to the National Trust to be a permanent memorial to the wartime Prime Minister. At the time of the bequest Sir Winston promised to leave Chartwell a representative collection of personal possessions and various articles of national and historic interest.

During the Second World War Sir Winston sometimes stayed not at Chartwell or at CHEQUERS,¹ but at the less vulnerable Oxfordshire

¹ See Chapter III.

manor of DITCHLEY, the original of which was known to both James I and Charles II's satirist friend the Earl of Rochester.

The present eighteenth-century manor replaces the old house where James used to stay with the Lees rather than go farther afield to the royal manor of Woodstock. One of the Lees was the Edward Henry Lee who, at the age of eleven, was created Earl of Lichfield for his marriage to one of Charles II's daughters by Barbara Castlemaine. This was Charlotte—probably the King's tenth child. They have another link with Sir Winston, for after the death of the brilliant, time-serving Sir George Downing, Charles gave No. 10 Downing Street to Charlotte and her husband. He used to enjoy visiting the young couple there, and Charlotte had a chair built for his special comfort.

Godstow Nunnery has gone, and Rosamond's Bower at Woodstock is now covered with grass, but LACOCK ABBEY,* Lacock House, and Lacock Village—one of the most beautiful in England—now belong to the National Trust. The Abbey remains, and the House may be inspected several days a week, but the House is open only between April and September.

Ela, the founder of Lacock Abbey, who married Rosamond's son William Longespée, was just eight years old when her father, Earl William, died. He had been prominent in the Court of Richard I, and was Keeper of the King's Charter for licensing tournaments throughout England—a position of considerable responsibility and colour. One of the five fields, or "steads," then set aside for tournaments lay between Salisbury and Wilton, and Ela, as a small child, must often have witnessed these splendid if perilous entertainments.

When Earl William died Ela inherited great estates and wealth, besides becoming Countess of Salisbury in her own right, and Richard, seeking to make an advantageous marriage for his half-brother, proposed to betroth the child to William Longespée, who was then about twenty-one. But no sooner had Earl William died than Ela was smuggled out of England, and "secretly taken into Normandy by her relations, and there brought up in secret and close custody." The "relations" no doubt included her mother, whose family owned property there, and Ela was probably hidden not from King Richard or his half-brother, but from the child's three uncles.

Each one of these three men knew that if Ela—and his two brothers—were dead he would inherit vast and wealthy estates, and Ela was so jealously guarded that no word of her whereabouts could be discovered even by the King.

A knight—and amateur jongleur—at the English Court, William

Talbot, volunteered to find Ela for Richard, for she had been removed from his legal wardship. Besides, Talbot was a friend of young William Longespée.

The knight disguised himself as a pilgrim and journeyed into Normandy, where he searched for the little heiress for two years before he discovered where she was hidden. Then, perhaps remembering Richard's own discovery in his castle of imprisonment by his faithful minstrel, Blondel, Talbot cast aside his pilgrim's habit and turned troubadour, the more easily to gain admittance to the castle where the child was held.

Talbot was an excellent jongleur, and so well versed in the "gests," or historical ballads of the day, that he was soon made very welcome. But always he was watching his opportunity, and at last he found a chance to return to England, taking Ela with him.

The King wasted no time in betrothing Ela, who was then ten, to William Longespée. They were married a few years later, and William became Earl of Salisbury in his wife's right.

William, Earl of Salisbury, was (most of the time) a staunch supporter of his half-brother King John (Richard died the year after William's betrothal). He held various posts during his reign, and was one of the nobles who upheld John at Runnymede at the signing of Magna Carta. He was also (most of the time) a staunch supporter of his young nephew Henry III, and if his loyalties wavered and vacillated now and again he was a better than average knight of his times.

Men always felt that there was something "different" about William Longespée, about Ela, his wife, and later about their eldest son.

To begin with, there was William's vision.

He was returning from an expedition to Gascony in 1225 when his ship was struck by a tempest. All seemed lost, and William, to be quit of earthly vanities, cast his precious rings and golden ornaments overboard. But suddenly he and all the men aboard beheld a great light shining at the masthead, encircling a maiden "adorned with exquisite beauty." The men knew not who the maid might be, but William Longespée knew without a doubt that it was the Virgin Mary sent to save him, for ever since the day he was knighted he had kept a light burning before her altar.

After such an experience no one was surprised the following year when, at his funeral procession from Salisbury Castle to Salisbury Cathedral, neither the wind nor the rain extinguished the lights born by the mourners.

William Longespée's eldest son was another William, the eldest of a family of four sons and four daughters.

He joined a Crusade against the Saracens in 1250, and was killed in a valiant fight in which the Saracens speedily cut off his left foot with their "long swords of well-tempered steel." William supported himself on a friend's shoulder, and cut off the heads of every one his right arm could reach. When the Saracens cut off his right hand he transferred his sword to his left, and continued to fight till he had lost both hands and both feet.

When he was buried the men declared that his tomb was lit by a miraculous light shining overhead.

The night before the great battle against the Saracens William's mother, the Countess Ela, saw a vision. She saw a knight in full armour entering the gates of Heaven. The vision was so clear that she even recognized the device upon the knight's shield, but she was so startled to see the angels welcoming the knight in such blinding glory that she cried out, "Who is it? Who is it?"

A gentle voice replied, "It is William, thy son!"

And when friends ventured to break the news to Ela of her son's death they found not a sorrowing mother, but a woman full of exultation.

Twelve years after her husband's death Ela founded a monastery for nuns of the Order of St Austin, at Lacock. That same year she took the veil herself. The following year she was elected Abbess, and she remained at the monastery till she died, an old and much respected lady.

One of the treasures Ela guarded at Lacock was the text of the third and final reissue of Magna Carta, dated February 11, 1225, when her husband's nephew Henry III was on the throne. Only one other example is still in existence, and it is now in the archives of Durham Cathedral. The Lacock text remained at the Abbey till 1945, when it was presented to the British Museum by Miss Matilda Talbot, C.B.E., who also presented Lacock to the National Trust.

For three centuries Lacock Abbey was a centre of devotion, but at the Dissolution of the Monasteries Henry VIII sold it to Sir William Sharington, who had once been page of the King's Robes, for £783.

Sharington was a bad man.

He was knighted at Edward VI's Coronation, not long after he had become Vice-Treasurer of the Mint at Bristol. He at once realized what a golden opportunity this offered, and he wasted not a moment in organizing a series of highly lucrative frauds. He minted illegal "testons," or shillings, made a valuable income by clipping and shearing other coins, and to hide his misdeeds falsified the books.

After some years of this successful thieving Sharrington began to grow worried about what would happen if the frauds were discovered. To secure a powerful protector he entered into the plots hatched by Lord Seymour—the Admiral Seymour who married Catherine Parr¹ after Henry VIII's death. In return for Seymour's promised protection Sharrington not only lent him money, but undertook to mint £10,000 specially to raise supporters for the Admiral's schemes.

But Lord Seymour was not strong enough to protect even himself. Eventually Sharrington's purchases of a host of rich properties aroused suspicion. Lacock was searched, he was arrested, and sent to the Tower. After flatly denying any knowledge of any frauds, or of any of Seymour's plots, Sharrington finally confessed and threw himself on the King's mercy. He was pardoned, and allowed to buy back his forfeited estates—but Seymour's connivance at Sharrington's frauds was made one of the counts in the indictment which ended in his execution.

After his experience of the Tower Sharrington became such a reformed character that Latimer later described him as an "honest gentleman and one whom God loveth."

Sir William destroyed the Abbey Church when he purchased Lacock, but he added a beautiful octagonal tower when he built a Tudor mansion round the old monastic remains. The twisted chimney-stacks and the great courtyard with half-timbered gables and a clock-house are the main features of the old Tudor mansion, which has been altered several times.

Sir William had no children, and he was succeeded by his brother Henry, whose daughter Olive became the eventual inheritor. She married John Talbot (a pure coincidence that his name was the same as Ela's troubadour).

Olive Sharrington, like Ela, William Longespée, and their son William, has her own legendary story. Olive had for long loved John Talbot, but the alliance was frowned on by her father. But Olive, determined to risk all for love, leaped into her lover's arms from the tower, or perhaps the roof. Fortunately her skirts, "being voluminous, did somewhat sustain her," and she suffered no greater harm than breaking her little finger. Her lover, however, "fell to the ground in a swoon." Her determination softened her father's heart, and he declared that "since she had made such a leap, she should een marry him."

So marry him she did.

After that Talbot succeeded Talbot, the most famous of them being William Fox Talbot, who was born at Lacock in 1800 and died there seventy-seven years later.

¹ See this chapter, under Sizergh Castle.

Fox Talbot was a pioneer of photography. Daguerre exhibited his success with pictures taken by the sun in 1839, but Fox Talbot had achieved similar success even earlier. In 1841 he invented the Talbotype process. He continued his experiments at the Abbey, and in 1851 devised a method of instantaneous photography which pointed the way to modern photography.

Lacock was in possession of the Talbot family till 1944, when it was given to the National Trust.

NEIGHBOURING PLEASURES

The most important 'neighbouring pleasure' is not neighbouring geographically, for it is WARTON, in Lancashire. But Warton is closely connected with the ancestors of Sir Winston Churchill.

In the fifteenth century Robert Kitson lived at Warton Hall with his daughter Margaret, who married John Washington, and his son Thomas Kitson, who became Sir Thomas and a wealthy merchant. Margaret Kitson and her husband, John Washington, were the ancestors of George Washington, first President of the United States.

Her brother Sir Thomas Kitson and his wife were the ancestors of Sir Winston Churchill. Their daughter Katherine married Sir John Spencer. Katherine and John became the grandparents of Robert, first Lord Spencer, the direct ancestor of Sir Winston, whose Christian names are Winston Leonard Spencer.

Between Warton and Kendal is the great Border Castle SIZERGH.* For seven hundred years Sizergh Castle was the home of the Stricklands, the inheritance descending every time in the direct male line—and for all of the seven hundred years the Stricklands were prominent in all the affairs of their day. One of them fought with Henry V at the Battle of Agincourt. One of them was the Bishop of Carlisle. One of them, Thomas Strickland, was knighted by Charles I at the Battle of Edgehill, and after the Restoration became Privy Purse to Charles II.

Many of the Stricklands were Members of Parliament; many more of them were busy Border lords, constantly raiding the Scottish Border, equally constantly repelling attacks as the Scottish Border Lords in their turn raided Cumberland and Westmorland.

When the Scots defeated Edward II at Bannockburn they celebrated for years to come by swooping down, far into England, rounding up the stock and driving it back into their own territory. They raped the women—or carried them off with the stock—murdered the children, and set fire to the farms and churches.

The Scottish raids became so constant that a new type of defence began to grow up—great peel towers like the one at Sizergh Castle, built about 1340. Wooden defences were useless. They went up in flames on every side. So the peel towers were built for strength and safety. They were solid, dour, gaunt, practical buildings, mostly two or three storeys high, built for business and with very little comfort about them. The only entrance was a small door, too small to be rushed by the attackers, and even if they did break in they would still have to fight their way up a narrow, winding staircase.

After Thomas Howard, the seventy-year-old second Duke of Norfolk,¹ defeated the Scots at Flodden Field in 1513 the raids lost some of their frequency and ferocity, but private wars still went on all along the immediate Border lands. Everything worth stealing was stolen, by both sides, and the thieving of cattle and sheep to fill the larder was regarded as fair game, no more remarkable in any way than hunting or fishing. And tradition says that when the lady of the manor was running short of food she would serve her lord with a pair of spurs on a dish—a hint to go raiding the enemy.

Catherine Parr, the luckiest of Henry VIII's wives, was born at Kendal, and must often have heard stories of the fierce Border raids when she visited Sizergh Castle. She stayed there many times before her marriage, the Stricklands being relatives of hers. The tapestried room where she slept is in the peel tower—now the oldest part of this venerable old castle.

The room above the Queen's Room is said to be haunted by the ghost of the wife of one of the wild Stricklands of the Border wars. Whenever he went off to war he locked his wife in this room, and forbade the servants, under pain of death, to release her before his return. The terrified servants obeyed his instructions, even though he was away for weeks that stretched into months; even though they knew at last that he never would return. Nothing would persuade them to release his frantic and beseeching wife. She went mad and died in that room above Catherine Parr's.

Among the treasures preserved at the castle—and they are many, and priceless—are a tablecloth and a counterpane of white satin embroidered with flowers, birds, and butterflies. They are thought to have been worked by Catherine.

Catherine Parr, the daughter of Sir Thomas Parr, an official of the Royal Household, was, like her royal husband, much married. She had been twice widowed before she married the King at Hampton Court,

¹ See Chapter III, under Arundel.

and very shortly after he died in 1547 she married her former lover, Lord Seymour, brother of Lord Protector Somerset, and uncle of the young Edward VI. Catherine Parr died in 1548. The following year Lord Seymour¹ was executed for treason.

In 1950 two members of the Strickland family gave Sizergh Castle to the National Trust, together with 1800 acres and an endowment. The castle is open to the public once a week between April and October.

Five miles north east of Kendal lies GRAYRIGG. At one time Grayrigg Hall belonged to the Duckett family, but they were blasted by a curse which reduced the family to poverty and the old Hall to ruins.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, there was a well-known Quaker, Francis Howgill, living near Grayrigg. When he refused to take the oath of allegiance at Kendal he was thrown into gaol. After some persuasion Francis Howgill was allowed out of gaol to settle various private matters before attending the Assizes, and while he was at liberty he went to see Mr Justice Duckett, of Grayrigg Hall. Mr Justice Duckett was a great persecutor of Quakers, and he had been one of those who had committed Howgill to gaol.

Duckett was not a little surprised to see the Quaker. "What is your wish now, Francis Howgill? I had thought you were in gaol," he declared, in some surprise, as the Quaker entered his study.

"No," replied the Quaker quietly. "I am not in gaol, but I am come to you with a message from the Lord. Thou has persecuted the Lord's people, but His hand is now against thee, and He will send a blast upon all that thou hast, and thy name shall rot out of the earth, and this thy dwelling shall become desolate, and a habitation for jackdaws and owls."

Mr Justice Duckett quailed before the burning eyes and stern words of the Quaker.

"Good sir," he cried, "are you in earnest?"

"I am indeed!" replied Francis Howgill, as he strode angrily away.

The prophecy foretold in the quiet of the study at Grayrigg came true soon enough. Mr Justice Duckett had several children. All of them died without issue, and the last of the family, a derelict old woman, was reduced to begging from door to door.

Grayrigg Hall was dismantled and allowed to fall into complete ruin. Its derelict walls served as a shelter for jackdaws and owls.

Even farther north, in Cumberland, once stood CROGLIN GRANGE, a single-storey mansion let to two brothers and a sister. The three of them

¹ See Chapter III.

joined happily in neighbouring pursuits, and all were gay and deservedly popular.

But one night, after the sister had kissed her brothers good-night, and retired to bed, she caught a glimpse of a ghastly "something" stalking across the lawn towards her bedroom window. "Something" scratched at the window. It was locked, and as the sister cowered in her bed the "something" began picking away at the lead on the window-panes. At last the petrified girl, too terrified to cry out, saw a long, bony hand stretch in and open the window. The "something" stepped into the room, pounced over to the bed, and, twisting its long fingers in her hair, bit her in the throat.

At that moment the girl recovered her speech, and screamed at the top of her voice.

The two brothers rushed in to find the girl seriously hurt, but with no trace of the "something" which she declared had vanished across the lawn. Little by little the girl recovered her health sufficiently for the three of them to go off to Switzerland together to complete her recuperation. Soon she was so well that the "something" seemed a creature too vague to be real, and it was the sister who insisted that it was time their holiday ended and that they return to Croglin Grange.

The neighbours gave the family a great welcome home, and all seemed well. But not long afterwards a night came when the girl heard a terrifying scratch, scratch, scratch on the window-panes. This time the girl managed to scream before the "something" entered the room. Her brothers rushed in with revolvers, and they blazed away at the "something" as it fled into the garden. One of the brothers scored a hit in the creature's leg, but in a flash it disappeared into the vault of a family long since extinct.

The following morning the brothers summoned their servants and their tenants, and in their presence the ancient vault was opened. All the contents were mutilated and scattered in great confusion about the floor of the vault. There was but one intact coffin, and when the brothers opened it and peered in there lay a creature with a brown face, withered, shrivelled, evil—but entire. It was wounded in the leg.

The two young men did the only thing that can be done to lay a vampire. They burnt it.

After that day no "something" was seen to stalk across the lawn at Croglin Grange; no bony hand scratched at the lead of the windows.

A much pleasanter story belongs to EDENHALL, near Penrith, the story of "The Luck of Edenhall."

The "Luck" is the property of the Musgraves, who lived at Edenhall from the middle of the fifteenth century till the old manor became a school some years ago.

Not far from Edenhall is a fairy well, dedicated to St Cuthbert, the Tweedside shepherd who became Bishop of LINDISFARNE.^{1*} One day a party of fairies was dancing round the well when they were interrupted by a mortal. It was none other than the Musgraves' butler, who had gone to the well to draw water. As he approached the well the frightened fairies scattered in all directions, leaving behind them a thick glass cup, and shouting as they ran:

"If this Cup should break or fall,
Farewell the Luck of Edenhall."

Like the famous (and still existent) Fairy Flag of Dunvegan, the Edenhall "Luck" probably came from the East. Possibly it came from Damascus, brought back to England by a thirteenth-century Crusader. But, wherever it came from, it is a cup of yellowish glass, amber at the base, lying in a leather case with the monogram "IHS" on it. The monogram was probably inscribed on the case for talismanic reasons, to forestall any attempt by the fairies to recover the "Luck" of the Musgraves.

The "Luck" may possibly have been a token of land tenure, like the Pusey Horn,² for in an age when few people were literate and there were few documents, visible evidence of ownership was sometimes granted instead.

A very near 'neighbouring pleasure' to CHARTWELL stands in the same town of Westerham, in Kent. It is QUEBEC HOUSE,* where James Wolfe, the hero of the capture of Quebec, lived for some years when a small boy. His father, Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Wolfe, had served under John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough, in the Netherlands, and in 1727 his son was born in the vicarage at Westerham, very close to where the Duke of Marlborough's famous descendant bought his home.

James Wolfe was born at the vicarage while his family was waiting to move into their home, now called Quebec House.

The house, which is a red-brick gabled building, probably dates from the sixteenth century, but it is now mostly a seventeenth-century building, later additions being removed in 1913 by Mr J. B. Learmont, of Montreal, whose widow presented the old house to the National Trust in 1918.

¹ See Chapter II.

² See Chapter V.

James Wolfe and his parents lived in Quebec House till he was ten, when they moved to Greenwich, but many relics of the famous general and his parents are now displayed at the house, which is open to the public free several days a week. Among the treasures on view is the General's Flemish-silk dressing-gown in which his body was brought back from Canada.

The Duke of Marlborough had two great interests—war and his Sarah. James Wolfe had a wider range of interests, which included dancing, fencing, reading, and riding, but in spite of his poor health he was always, from small boyhood, determined to be a soldier. He was only fourteen when he was given his first commission, as a second lieutenant in his father's regiment of marines.

After that James Wolfe saw a great deal of service on the Continent, and fought at the Battle of Culloden under "Butcher" Cumberland before being given command of an expedition to make a renewed attempt to capture Quebec from the French. His gallantry and intelligence won him the respect of his superiors, and he was much loved by his men in spite of his uncertain temper.

Things did not go smoothly in Canada. His fellow-officers considered many of his suggestions far from acceptable. One of them wrote home that "General Wolfe's health is bad. His generalship in my opinion is not a bit better."

But it was his strategy that won Quebec for the English.

After consulting his staff Wolfe embarked his men in ships, but, instead of landing them some miles above Quebec, as his staff expected, he took a force of 1700 downstream to a spot known now as Wolfe's Cave. Here they disembarked secretly in the small hours of the morning. Above them towered the wooded cliffs, so steep that "a hundred men posted there would stop a whole army." Wolfe was gambling on this very fact—that the cliff was so "unscalable" that the French commander, Montcalm, would leave it virtually undefended.

His gamble came off. The English soldiers scaled the cliffs, surprised the small guard, and, with the deadly efficiency of their rifle-fire, decided the issue within a few minutes. Wolfe was wounded three times. As the third musket-ball hit him he turned to two companions, and, with their help, managed to walk a short way before he was compelled to lie down.

"Don't grieve for me," he cried. "I shall be happy in a few minutes." Then, seeing that one of his companions was himself wounded, he said, "Take care of yourself, as I see you are wounded."

When his men gave him the news that the French were being driven

out of the town Wolfe smiled and said, "Now I die contented," and so, still smiling, he died.

James Wolfe, like another Englishman who will always be remembered in Westerham, was red-headed.

The main road between Stratford and Coventry runs through Aynhoe Village, some miles north of Woodstock. The charming stone cottages there are watched over by the majestic AYNHOE PARK,* which, unlike so many 'stately homes,' can be clearly seen from the road. Aynhoe is one of the loveliest houses in Northamptonshire.

There was a castle here in medieval times, but that had disappeared when Richard Cartwright bought the property about 1615. It has belonged to the Cartwright family ever since, but Aynhoe itself has not had an unruffled existence.

Richard's son John was a Parliamentary. Just as Woodstock was garrisoned for the King, Aynhoe was garrisoned for the Roundheads, and, contrary to the usual story told of the big manors, this time the Royalists were the besiegers and the victors. The house was considerably damaged during the siege, but it was even more damaged later on, when the Royalists set fire to it as they retreated to Oxford after their defeat at the Battle of Naseby.

John's son William was also strongly Parliamentary, and he married Ursula Fairfax, half-sister to Sir Thomas Fairfax, Cromwell's general, and father of Mary,¹ later the unhappy neglected wife of George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham.

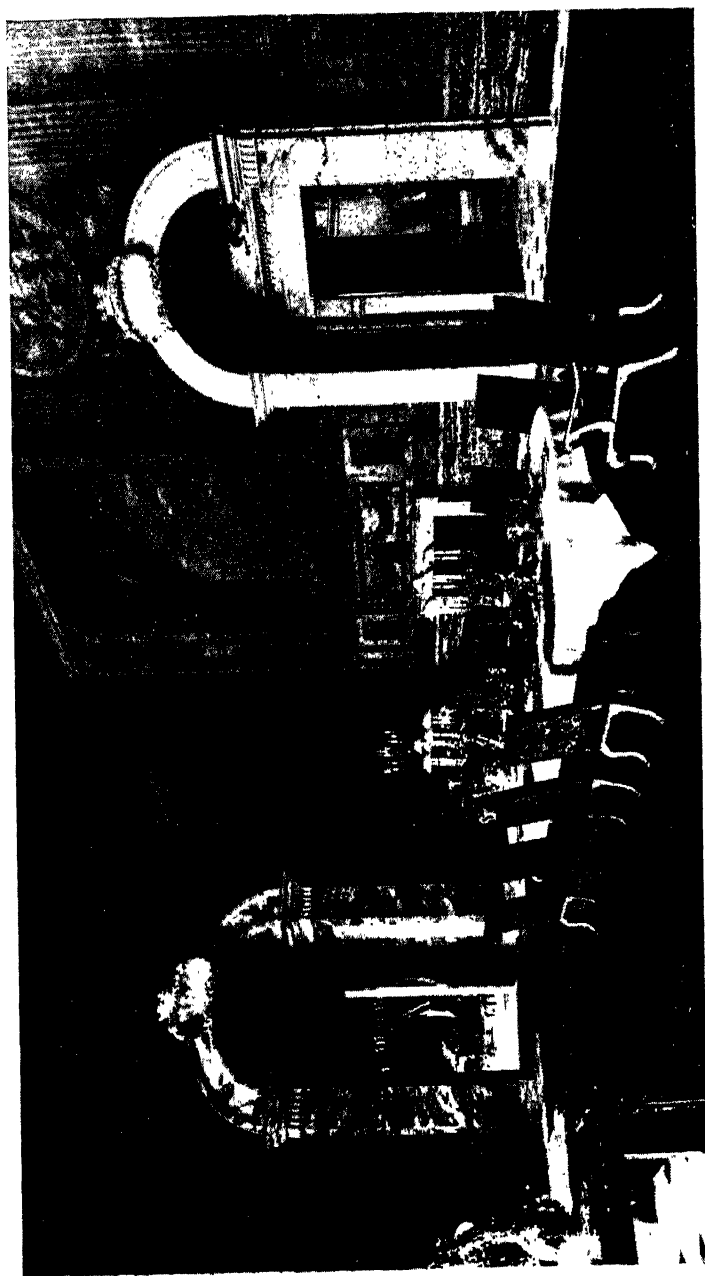
After the Restoration the Cartwright family claimed and won heavy compensation, and the remains of John Cartwright's Aynhoe were remodelled while Charles II was on the throne, and enlarged in the eighteenth century.

Family portraits in this lovely old home are now grouped up the famous white staircase—and the blue-and-white library contains not only some six thousand antiquarian volumes, but one of the very few portraits of George I.

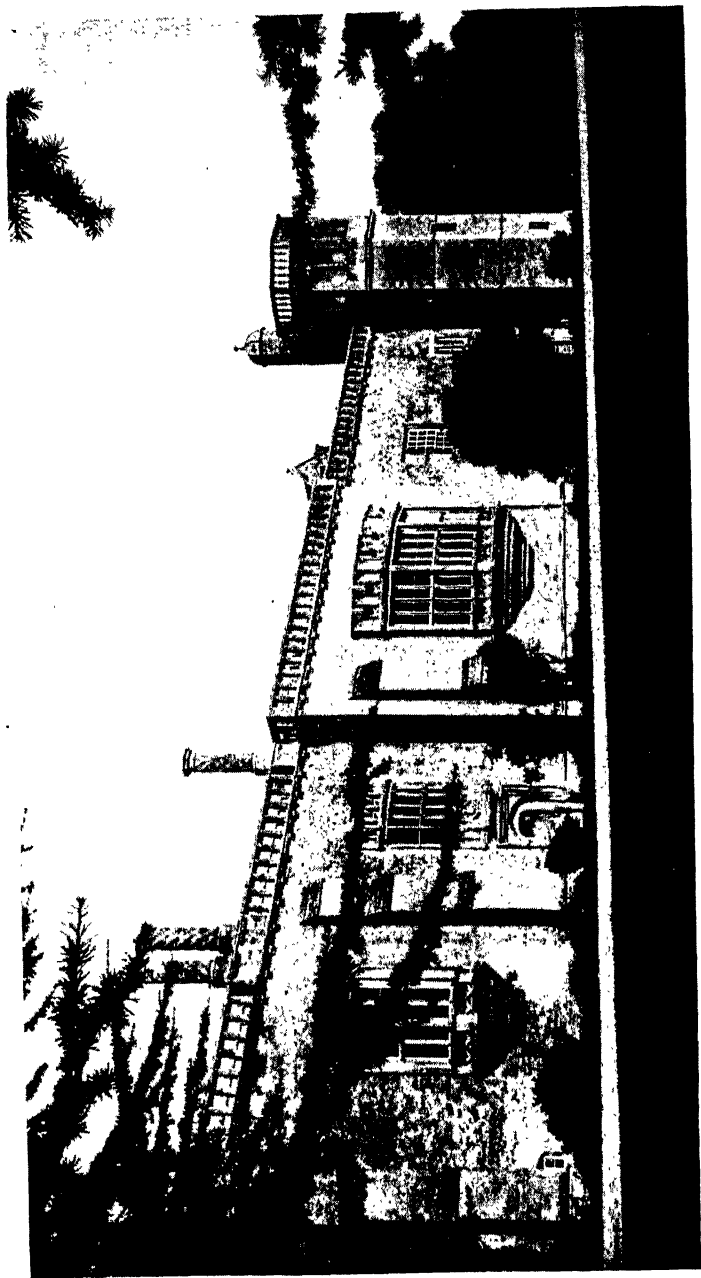
The whole house, which is open to the public between April and October, is a treasure-house of lovely things. Among them is a Meissen dinner service, painted with views of Dresden. It is thought to have been left on the battlefield of Waterloo by Napoleon, and it was picked up in its red-leather travelling-cases by Lieutenant-General William Cartwright.

A little to the south of Woodstock is MINSTER LOVELL, usually given as the locale for the grim little story of the lost bride. Like many

¹ See Chapter I.



BLENNHEIM PALACE
Photo British Travel Association



LACOCK MANOR

Photo British Travel Association

another story which has persisted through the years, the story of the bride in the chest is told of various places, but Minster Lovell Castle seems to have as good a claim to it as any.

Long ago the great rooms in the old castle rang with laughter and merriment, for this was the wedding night of one of the Lovells and his lovely young bride. Some one suggested a game of hide-and-seek, and the bride ran off with the others to conceal herself. But she knew the castle better than many of the guests. She slipped into a room by herself and, seeing an oak chest standing against the wall, she opened the lid, climbed in, and pulled the lid to. The lock closed with a snap.

The groom, Lord Lovell, searched high and low, and at last, growing frantic, he summoned the guests, and they too searched every room. The bride was never seen again—till many years later, when the chest was opened, and her skeleton was found, lying there in all the faded glory of her wedding gown.

Another story says that the skeleton found in 1708 was not that of the young bride, but of Francis, Lord Lovell, a deserter from the Civil War. He was hidden in a secret chamber in the castle by a serving-maid. But the maid died suddenly, and Lord Lovell was left to die slowly of starvation.

But, whether it was the bride who died or the deserter, strange cries and lamentations have been heard by travellers on the near-by road to Witney.

Not far from Westerham is LULLINGSTONE CASTLE,* at Eynsford, which has belonged to the Hart Dyke family since the fifteenth century. The core of the house dates from that period, but much of it was rebuilt or remodelled in Queen Anne's reign, and there have been recent alterations as well.

Lullingstone at one time belonged to Sir John Peche, of London—a fine performer at jousts and tournaments. When young Prince Henry (later Henry VIII) was created Duke of York at the age of three or four a great tournament was held in London as part of the celebrations. Sir John Peche was chosen to be one of the challengers for the occasion, and with three other horsemen rode out from Westminster Hall. Their horses were caparisoned in the royal colours, and hung with bells of silver and gilt.

At the tournament itself Sir John acquitted himself so well that he broke no fewer than fourteen spears—and was duly rewarded.

"After the souper began the daunces," which done, Sir John was presented to "the ladie Margarete, the kingis oldeste daughter," who gave him as a prize, "a ryng of gold with a ruby."

Lullingstone Castle was once surrounded by a moat, but this was filled in in 1763, when the inner gateway was pulled down. The outer gateway is still standing, however, in spite of bomb damage. This was probably built in Henry VIII's reign.

The castle is now famous as Zoë, Lady Hart Dyke's, silk farm, which is open to the public every day between April and September.

In 1952 an old custom—the ceremony of the blessing of the silk industry—was revived at St Michael's Abbey at Farnborough.

Representatives of the industry from Birmingham, Macclesfield, Braintree, and other districts attended the ceremony. So did Lady Hart Dyke and the Lullingstone silkworms, and Miss Lily Lee, from Braintree, Essex, who wove the velvet for the Coronation robes of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, and for the 1953 Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

Men, women, boys, and girls all attended the ceremony. They carried mulberry-bushes, mulberry-seed, silkworm-eggs and -cocoons, cones of silk and silk fabrics, and many of the implements used in the manufacture of silk as they walked in procession into the Abbey, where they were blessed by the Lord Abbot of Prinknash Abbey.

The raw silk for the Queen's velvet Coronation robe was produced on Lady Hart Dyke's farm. It was woven by Miss Lily Lee on a primitive-looking loom, the silk being so fine that the material scarcely seemed to grow even in a day's work. The velvet was 21 inches wide, more than 20 yards long, with 16,000 small, upstanding ends of pile (all cut by hand) to every square inch.

The raw silk from the castle had previously been boiled to free it from gum, dyed the colour of deep violets in huge copper vats, dried, and generally prepared for the weaver. The material was made up by an old London firm, and then the robe was handed over to the women of the Royal School of Needlework to embroider. It was an all-British creation.

IX

The Wicked Tower

If there could be a human common denominator for this book it would be King Charles II, not only because he is associated personally with many of the homes, stately and otherwise, but also because most of his fourteen or fifteen children married into the nobility, and thus acquired 'stately homes'—north, south, east, and west. In fact, probably only three of his children did not marry—Catherine Fitz-Charles (his second child by Catherine Peg), who became a nun; James Beau-Clerc (his second son by Nell Gwynn), who died as a small boy; and Barbara Fitzroy (one of his daughters by Barbara Castlemaine), who retired to a nunnery after having an illegitimate son by the Duke of Hamilton.¹

Of the King's several children not already mentioned, the most interesting (because of her grandson, third Earl of Derwentwater) is Mary Tudor, his child by Moll Davis. Moll was a charming little singer and actress, and a wonderful dancer from the Duke's Theatre (where the Royal College of Surgeons in London now stands). Mrs Pepys described her as "the most impudent slut in the world," but she soon became a great favourite of the King, who was entirely captivated by her saucy songs and her flaming vitality.

If there could be an architectural common denominator for this book it would be the TOWER OF LONDON, that old, wicked broody hen which smothered the hopes—and the lives—of so many members of so many families, both high and lowly born.

Among those we have met, the Tower claimed as prisoner or victim a queen—Lady Jane Grey; a princess—Elizabeth Tudor; Royal favourites such as the three Roberts—Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Devereux, Earl of Essex, and Carr, Earl of Somerset. It claimed conspirators such as Guy Fawkes and his confederates; and it claimed common or garden malefactors such as the red-bearded, infamous apothecary Franklin who supplied poisons for the murder in the Tower of Sir Thomas Overbury.

¹ See Chapter I.

Few of the prisoners' terms of imprisonment in the Tower could have been in any way pleasant, though prisoners from the nobility were allowed to furnish their quarters themselves, and were at times allowed to have their families living with them. Sir Walter Raleigh's wife, for instance, the devoted Bessie Throckmorton, lived with him in the Tower for some years, and their son Carew was born there. Frances Howard, the wicked Countess of Somerset, was allowed her own bedroom furniture of crimson velvet trimmed with gold lace and fringes. But for most of the prisoners, even if such creature comforts were allowed, the Tower was a dangerous, terrifying place. It even frightened the invincible Princess Elizabeth. The sites of the two scaffolds were unpleasantly near, one on Tower Green, one on Tower Hill.

Adventure, and mostly unpleasant adventure, came to all those committed to the Tower. Princess Elizabeth's uneasy and anxious love affair with young Robert Dudley was an adventure more pleasant than most of the prisoners experienced. Some—like Elizabeth and Robert—were eventually released. A few escaped, but for most prisoners their adventure in the Tower ended in degradation and death.

That is what befell the son of Charles II's daughter Mary by the lively little actress Moll Davis.

This story begins with Sir Francis Redcliffe, owner of huge estates in Northumberland and Cumberland, including a dozen or more manors, among them the manor of DERWENTWATER, in the Lake District.

Sir Francis, later the Earl of Derwentwater, had a son Edward, and a great ambition to wed him to one of Charles II's daughters. When Edward was sixteen, his father tried to arrange a marriage between him and Charlotte Fitzroy, then eight years old, but she married the eleven-year-old Earl of Lichfield, of DRICHLEY,¹ instead. Sir Francis, still determined, bided his time, and fifteen years later, when Edward was thirty-one, he was married to Charles's daughter Lady Mary Tudor, then just fourteen.

Edward, second Earl of Derwentwater, and Mary had three sons. The important one was James, the eldest.

When young James was about thirteen he was sent to join the exiled James II and his second wife, Mary of Modena, then living in the Castle of Saint-Germain-en-Laye with their son Prince

¹ See Chapter VIII.

DEVEREUX TOWER

Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, was imprisoned here

THE MARTIN TOWER

where Henry Percy, "the wizard" Earl of Northumberland, was imprisoned after the Gunpowder Plot. Ambrose Rookwood, one of the Plotters, was a fellow-prisoner

BEAUCHAMP TOWER

where the five Dudley brothers were imprisoned

THE CHAPEL OF ST PETER AD VINCULA

Site of the block on Tower Green

THE BELL TOWER

where Princess Elizabeth was imprisoned; where Lady Katherine Grey's children were born; where her grandson's wife, Arabella Stuart, was imprisoned. Monmouth went to the scaffold from the Bell Tower

THE WHITE TOWER

Guy Fawkes was imprisoned in the dungeons

THE SALT TOWER

where a man was imprisoned for witchcraft

THE KING'S HOUSE

(once the Lieutenant's lodgings) where Anne Boleyn spent her last night; where Guy Fawkes was interrogated; and whence Lord Nithsdale escaped

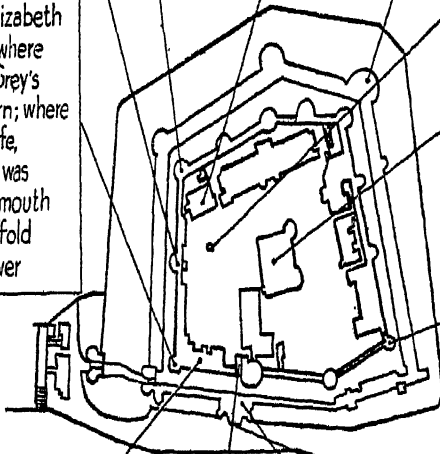
THE BLOODY TOWER

where the "Little Princes" were murdered; also Sir Thomas Overbury. Raleigh was imprisoned in this Tower, and his son Carew was born here: Judge Jeffreys died here

THE TRAITORS' GATE

ST THOMAS'S TOWER

from which Lord William Seymour escaped



James, who was about the same age as James Redcliffe. The two boys were brought up together; they were both Roman Catholics, so it was only natural that young James Redcliffe, by then third Earl of Derwentwater, should take part in the Jacobite Rising of 1715.

The Rising was foredoomed to failure, for there were few active Jacobites in England, and there was no hope of help from France. The Scottish Army supporting the Prince was defeated and scattered. Prince James himself escaped overseas, but Derwentwater and several of the other leaders, including the Earl of Nithsdale and Viscount Kenmure, were all captured and sent to the Tower.

As soon as they heard of their husbands' capture and imprisonment Lady Derwentwater and Lady Nithsdale made their separate ways to London, two heroic women who travelled more than three hundred miles over shocking roads in such appalling weather that even the post chaise could not get through. Lady Nithsdale's adventure is the better known. She drove and rode with her maid as her only attendant, through blinding snowstorms and bitter winter rains. At York her carriage was bogged to a standstill. There was no time to wait for the weather to clear, and, though the roads were infested with highwaymen and cut-throats, the two women waited only to secure horses, and together they rode off into the storm, taking the 180-mile-long highroad to London—and the Tower.

Lady Derwentwater's adventure was equally heroic—but her journey ended in tragedy. Derwentwater was offered his life if he would acknowledge the Hanoverian succession and renounce Roman Catholicism, but he refused, and he, Nithsdale, and Kenmure were all sentenced to death. Lady Derwentwater and her friends petitioned King George and the House of Lords, but to no avail. The three men were to die.

Early in the morning of his execution Derwentwater wrote several letters of farewell. One of them was to the parents of his wife, whom he had wooed with serenading, singing his own love-songs to the accompaniment of his guitar. Now he wrote to them:

By giving me your charming daughter, you made me the happiest of men. For she loves me tenderly and constantly; she is honour itself, and has had my honour for this world very much at heart, but my happiness in the next had made her very vigilant to support all her misfortunes and mine. This morning we parted—my heart and hers were ready to break.

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In 1575 Elizabeth became the mother of Arabella. She died when the child was only six or seven. At first Bess was genuinely fond of her granddaughter, but Arabella had too much character to knuckle under to Bess's tyrannies, and they were soon alienated. She received very little kindness or consideration from either Elizabeth or James. Their policy was to keep her unmarried, preferably for ever, and at any rate till she was too old to bear children, for neither of them wanted her to produce a son who might complicate the succession. James was certainly kinder to her than Elizabeth, for he gave her a good allowance, including a valuable licence to sell "wines and usquebaugh," which he hoped would placate her, but Arabella, like Katherine and Mary Grey, defied royal authority and got married. She made bad worse by marrying Lord William Seymour, Lady Katherine Grey's² grandson.

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But though the scheme had worked well, it had taken longer than Seymour had reckoned, and by the time he reached Blackwall it was two hours past the time he had arranged to meet Arabella, and the ship they had chartered was already out of sight. In a fever of anxiety, Seymour bribed a barge captain to take him to the Continent, and after many alarms and maddening delays it eventually did land him safely at Ostend.

Arabella was less fortunate. By sheer bad luck Admiral Monson happened to visit the inn at Blackwall where she had inquired for Seymour, and when he realized what was afoot he immediately ordered H.M.S. *Adventure* to pursue the French ship. She was overhauled within sight of freedom, and Arabella gave herself up. She was sent to the Tower, and lodged in the same room in the Bell Tower that had once been occupied by her grandmother, the Duchess of Lennox. Arabella remained in the Tower for



LACOCK MANOR

Photo British Travel Association

another story which has persisted through the years, the story of the bride in the chest is told of various places, but Minster Lovell Castle seems to have as good a claim to it as any.

Long ago the great rooms in the old castle rang with laughter and merriment, for this was the wedding night of one of the Lovells and his lovely young bride. Some one suggested a game of hide-and-seek, and the bride ran off with the others to conceal herself. But she knew the castle better than many of the guests. She slipped into a room by herself and, seeing an oak chest standing against the wall, she opened the lid, climbed in, and pulled the lid to. The lock closed with a snap.

The groom, Lord Lovell, searched high and low, and at last, growing frantic, he summoned the guests, and they too searched every room. The bride was never seen again—till many years later, when the chest was opened, and her skeleton was found, lying there in all the faded glory of her wedding gown.

Another story says that the skeleton found in 1708 was not that of the young bride, but of Francis, Lord Lovell, a deserter from the Civil War. He was hidden in a secret chamber in the castle by a serving-maid. But the maid died suddenly, and Lord Lovell was left to die slowly of starvation.

But, whether it was the bride who died or the deserter, strange cries and lamentations have been heard by travellers on the near-by road to Witney.

Not far from Westerham is LULLINGSTONE CASTLE,* at Eynsford, which has belonged to the Hart Dyke family since the fifteenth century. The core of the house dates from that period, but much of it was rebuilt or remodelled in Queen Anne's reign, and there have been recent alterations as well.

Lullingstone at one time belonged to Sir John Peché, of London—a fine performer at jousts and tourneys. When young Prince Henry (later Henry VIII) was created Duke of York at the age of three or four a great tournament was held in London as part of the celebrations. Sir John Peché was chosen to be one of the challengers for the occasion, and with three other horsemen rode out from Westminster Hall. Their horses were caparisoned in the royal colours, and hung with bells of silver and gilt.

At the tournament itself Sir John acquitted himself so well that he broke no fewer than fourteen spears—and was duly rewarded.

"After the souper began the daunces," which done, Sir John was presented to "the ladie Margarete, the kingis oldeste daughter," who gave him as a prize, "a ryng of gold with a ruby."

Lullingstone Castle was once surrounded by a moat, but this was filled in in 1763, when the inner gateway was pulled down. The outer gateway is still standing, however, in spite of bomb damage. This was probably built in Henry VIII's reign.

The castle is now famous as Zoë, Lady Hart Dyke's, silk farm, which is open to the public every day between April and September.

In 1952 an old custom—the ceremony of the blessing of the silk industry—was revived at St Michael's Abbey at Farnborough.

Representatives of the industry from Birmingham, Macclesfield, Braintree, and other districts attended the ceremony. So did Lady Hart Dyke and the Lullingstone silkworms, and Miss Lily Lee, from Braintree, Essex, who wove the velvet for the Coronation robes of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, and for the 1953 Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

Men, women, boys, and girls all attended the ceremony. They carried mulberry-bushes, mulberry-seed, silkworm-eggs and -cocoons, cones of silk and silk fabrics, and many of the implements used in the manufacture of silk as they walked in procession into the Abbey, where they were blessed by the Lord Abbot of Prinknash Abbey.

The raw silk for the Queen's velvet Coronation robe was produced on Lady Hart Dyke's farm. It was woven by Miss Lily Lee on a primitive-looking loom, the silk being so fine that the material scarcely seemed to grow even in a day's work. The velvet was 21 inches wide, more than 20 yards long, with 16,000 small, upstanding ends of pile (all cut by hand) to every square inch.

The raw silk from the castle had previously been boiled to free it from gum, dyed the colour of deep violets in huge copper vats, dried, and generally prepared for the weaver. The material was made up by an old London firm, and then the robe was handed over to the women of the Royal School of Needlework to embroider. It was an all-British creation.

IX

The Wicked Tower

If there could be a human common denominator for this book it would be King Charles II, not only because he is associated personally with many of the homes, stately and otherwise, but also because most of his fourteen or fifteen children married into the nobility, and thus acquired 'stately homes'—north, south, east, and west. In fact, probably only three of his children did not marry—Catherine Fitz-Charles (his second child by Catherine Peg), who became a nun; James Beau-Clerc (his second son by Nell Gwynn), who died as a small boy; and Barbara Fitzroy (one of his daughters by Barbara Castlemaine), who retired to a nunnery after having an illegitimate son by the Duke of Hamilton.¹

Of the King's several children not already mentioned, the most interesting (because of her grandson, third Earl of Derwentwater) is Mary Tudor, his child by Moll Davis. Moll was a charming little singer and actress, and a wonderful dancer from the Duke's Theatre (where the Royal College of Surgeons in London now stands). Mrs Pepys described her as "the most impudent slut in the world," but she soon became a great favourite of the King, who was entirely captivated by her saucy songs and her flaming vitality.

If there could be an architectural common denominator for this book it would be the TOWER OF LONDON, that old, wicked broody hen which smothered the hopes—and the lives—of so many members of so many families, both high and lowly born.

Among those we have met, the Tower claimed as prisoner or victim a queen—Lady Jane Grey; a princess—Elizabeth Tudor; Royal favourites such as the three Roberts—Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Devereux, Earl of Essex, and Carr, Earl of Somerset. It claimed conspirators such as Guy Fawkes and his confederates; and it claimed common or garden malefactors such as the red-bearded, infamous apothecary Franklin who supplied poisons for the murder in the Tower of Sir Thomas Overbury.

¹ See Chapter I.

Few of the prisoners' terms of imprisonment in the Tower could have been in any way pleasant, though prisoners from the nobility were allowed to furnish their quarters themselves, and were at times allowed to have their families living with them. Sir Walter Raleigh's wife, for instance, the devoted Bessie Throckmorton, lived with him in the Tower for some years, and their son Carew was born there. Frances Howard, the wicked Countess of Somerset, was allowed her own bedroom furniture of crimson velvet trimmed with gold lace and fringes. But for most of the prisoners, even if such creature comforts were allowed, the Tower was a dangerous, terrifying place. It even frightened the invincible Princess Elizabeth. The sites of the two scaffolds were unpleasantly near, one on Tower Green, one on Tower Hill.

Adventure, and mostly unpleasant adventure, came to all those committed to the Tower. Princess Elizabeth's uneasy and anxious love affair with young Robert Dudley was an adventure more pleasant than most of the prisoners experienced. Some—like Elizabeth and Robert—were eventually released. A few escaped, but for most prisoners their adventure in the Tower ended in degradation and death.

That is what befell the son of Charles II's daughter Mary by the lively little actress Moll Davis.

This story begins with Sir Francis Redcliffe, owner of huge estates in Northumberland and Cumberland, including a dozen or more manors, among them the manor of DERWENTWATER, in the Lake District.

Sir Francis, later the Earl of Derwentwater, had a son Edward, and a great ambition to wed him to one of Charles II's daughters. When Edward was sixteen, his father tried to arrange a marriage between him and Charlotte Fitzroy, then eight years old, but she married the eleven-year-old Earl of Lichfield, of DITCHLEY,¹ instead. Sir Francis, still determined, bided his time, and fifteen years later, when Edward was thirty-one, he was married to Charles's daughter Lady Mary Tudor, then just fourteen.

Edward, second Earl of Derwentwater, and Mary had three sons. The important one was James, the eldest.

When young James was about thirteen he was sent to join the exiled James II and his second wife, Mary of Modena, then living in the Castle of Saint-Germain-en-Laye with their son Prince

¹ See Chapter VIII.

DEVEREUX TOWER

Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, was imprisoned here

BEAUCHAMP TOWER

where the five Dudley brothers were imprisoned

THE CHAPEL OF ST PETER AD VINCULA

THE MARTIN TOWER

where Henry Percy, "the wizard" Earl of Northumberland, was imprisoned after the Gunpowder Plot. Ambrose Rookwood, one of the Plotters, was a fellow-prisoner

THE BELL TOWER

where Princess Elizabeth was imprisoned; where Lady Katherine Grey's children were born; where her grandson's wife, Arabella Stuart, was imprisoned. Monmouth went to the scaffold from the Bell Tower

Site of the block on Tower Green

THE WHITE TOWER

Guy Fawkes was imprisoned in the dungeons

THE SALT TOWER

where a man was imprisoned for witchcraft

THE KING'S HOUSE

(once the Lieutenant's lodgings) where Anne Boleyn spent her last night; where Guy Fawkes was interrogated; and whence Lord Nithsdale escaped

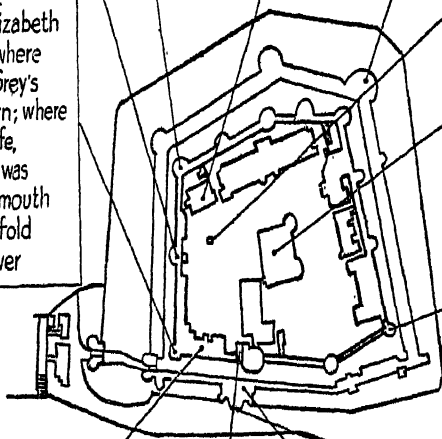
THE BLOODY TOWER

where the "Little Princes" were murdered; also Sir Thomas Overbury. Raleigh was imprisoned in this Tower, and his son Carew was born here. Judge Jeffreys died here

THE TRAITORS' GATE

ST THOMAS'S TOWER

from which Lord William Seymour escaped



James, who was about the same age as James Redcliffe. The two boys were brought up together; they were both Roman Catholics, so it was only natural that young James Redcliffe, by then third Earl of Derwentwater, should take part in the Jacobite Rising of 1715.

The Rising was foredoomed to failure, for there were few active Jacobites in England, and there was no hope of help from France. The Scottish Army supporting the Prince was defeated and scattered. Prince James himself escaped overseas, but Derwentwater and several of the other leaders, including the Earl of Nithsdale and Viscount Kenmure, were all captured and sent to the Tower.

As soon as they heard of their husbands' capture and imprisonment Lady Derwentwater and Lady Nithsdale made their separate ways to London, two heroic women who travelled more than three hundred miles over shocking roads in such appalling weather that even the post chaise could not get through. Lady Nithsdale's adventure is the better known. She drove and rode with her maid as her only attendant, through blinding snowstorms and bitter winter rains. At York her carriage was bogged to a standstill. There was no time to wait for the weather to clear, and, though the roads were infested with highwaymen and cut-throats, the two women waited only to secure horses, and together they rode off into the storm, taking the 180-mile-long highroad to London—and the Tower.

Lady Derwentwater's adventure was equally heroic—but her journey ended in tragedy. Derwentwater was offered his life if he would acknowledge the Hanoverian succession and renounce Roman Catholicism, but he refused, and he, Nithsdale, and Kenmure were all sentenced to death. Lady Derwentwater and her friends petitioned King George and the House of Lords, but to no avail. The three men were to die.

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four years. She went mad, and in 1615 she was released—by death.

Lord William Seymour later succeeded to the titles of Duke of Somerset and Earl of Hertford. In 1649, bearing no grudge against the son of the King who had imprisoned him, Seymour offered to take the place of Charles I on the scaffold.

The old and wicked Tower had not been used as a royal residence since the days of James I. Nor, except for a few special prisoners such as Sir Roger Casement and Rudolph Hess (who was there for a few days only in 1941), has it been used as a prison since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The vast air of intrigue and danger that once enveloped the old building is now partially lost in a atmosphere of near-domesticity, for now sleek cats sleep under the bloodstained walls (albeit with one eye on the evil-tempered ravens), and bottles of milk stand in innocence by doors where stealthy villains stalked, whence those in new disgrace were taken forth to die.

But if the tortures and the horrors have gone the visitors have come, and close on a million people from all over the world inspect the Tower every year.

Many of the Towers within the Tower are associated for ever with men and women we have met in these stories.

The most famous of all is the *Bloody Tower*, where the "little Princes"—Edward V and his young brother, Richard, Duke of York (already married to little Ann Mowbray¹)—were murdered.

Sir Thomas Overbury,² the squire's son from the Cotswolds, the man "of dark ability" who opposed the Countess of Essex in her efforts to become Countess of Somerset, was murdered in the Bloody Tower. He proved most difficult to kill. It was admitted at the trial of the Earl and Countess of Somerset that he had taken enough poison to kill twenty men—in wines, soups, and medicines, in salt, in pepper, and finally in a clyster.

Sir Walter Raleigh³ spent most of his thirteen years' imprisonment in the same Bloody Tower, writing his *History of the World* there, and there finding out, among other scientific discoveries, the secret of distilling fresh water from salt water. His son Carew was born in the Bloody Tower.

Sir Walter was a prisoner who never lost the affection of

¹ See Chapter III, under Arundel Castle.

² See Chapter VI.

³ See Chapter VII.

Londoners, nor of the sailors who plied up and down the Thames so near his prison.

Another popular prisoner, and one who was allowed to exercise on the short stretch of wall known as "Raleigh's Walk," was John Felton,¹ the young soldier who murdered the Duke of Buckingham in Portsmouth. He had had an almost triumphant entry into the grim prison, and people gathered to call encouragement to him while he was waiting execution at Tyburn.

The Duke of Monmouth²—the facile, fascinating "Revolting Darling" of the ballad—was possibly lodged in the Bloody Tower after the Battle of Sedgemoor before being taken to the Bell Tower on the eve of his execution. By some poetic justice the infamous Judge Jeffreys, who treated Monmouth's men with such ferocity at the "Bloody Assizes," was himself a prisoner in the Bloody Tower. When James II escaped from England after the landing of William of Orange, Judge Jeffreys also tried to escape. He disguised himself as a sailor, but he was recognized in a tavern near Wapping by a man he had once maltreated. The mob set on him and carried him triumphantly to the Tower. The news of his imprisonment was received with the utmost satisfaction throughout England.

He died in the Tower of disease and drink at the age of forty-one.

The *Beauchamp Tower* was always the main prison for people of rank. It was named after one of the Beauchamps who were the Earls of Warwick, and, strangely enough, it was the prison of a later Earl of Warwick, John Dudley, son of the executed Duke of Northumberland,³ brother of the executed Guildford Dudley, and brother of his fellow-prisoner Robert Dudley, who later became Elizabeth's Earl of Leicester.

The Beauchamp Tower is famous for the dozens of inscriptions carved or scratched on the walls. One of the most expertly done is the carving by John Dudley of the family badge of a lion and a bear and ragged staff. He added his name "John Dvdle," and surrounded the whole design with a garland of roses, oak-leaves, gillyflowers, and honeysuckle—to represent the names of the four brothers imprisoned with him. The rose was for Ambrose; the oak for Robert, from *robur*, an oak; gillyflowers stood for Guildford; and the honeysuckle for Henry.

The word "Iane" is another of the inscriptions in the Bloody

¹ See Chapter I.

² See Chapter VII.

³ See Chapters III and V.

Tower—perhaps a final despairing message of love to Lady Jane Grey from the quarrelsome Guildford Dudley.

Jane¹ herself was a prisoner in the *Gentleman Jailer's House*, an older building that the present seventeenth-century house has replaced. It adjoins the *King's House*, where Anne Boleyn² spent the last days of her life. Many years later the defiant Guy Fawkes,³ imprisoned in the dungeons of the *White Tower*, was interrogated in the Council Chamber in the King's House (then called the Lieutenant's Lodgings). Later still Lord Nithsdale escaped through the door here to Italy and old age.

Lady Katherine Grey's two children were born in the *Bell Tower*, and it was here that her grandson's wife, Arabella Stuart, was imprisoned. Elizabeth, the Queen who imprisoned Lady Katherine, remembered the Bell Tower only too well, for there she herself had been imprisoned after the Wyatt Rebellion. After a few weeks of close confinement Elizabeth—then Princess Elizabeth—was allowed to take exercise on Tower Green, overlooked by Beauchamp Tower, where her old playmate and future favourite, Robert Dudley, was imprisoned. Her younger favourite, Dudley's stepson, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex,⁴ was imprisoned in *Devereux Tower*, the tower being renamed in his honour. Before that it had been known as "Robin the Devyl's Tower." There is no certainty who "Robin the Devyl" was, though he may have been William the Conqueror's eldest son.

In spite of its long and gory history, there are few stories of ghosts at the Tower of London. But Yeomen living in Beauchamp Tower have repeatedly heard ghostly footsteps running distractedly up and down stairways, and once when a Yeoman's wife was ill he saw a ghostly figure come into the room, lean over the sick woman . . . and fade away into nothingness. And in the *Martin Tower*, where prisoners arrested for complicity in the Gunpowder Plot were imprisoned, doors open mysteriously, and as mysteriously close.

Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland,⁵ who was implicated in the Gunpowder Plot through his relationship to Thomas Percy, one of the principal Plotters, was imprisoned in the Martin Tower for nearly sixteen years. Owing to his interest in scientific experiments, which he carried on with the help of three assistants

¹ See Chapter III.

³ See Chapter IV.

⁴ See Chapter V.

² See Chapter II.

⁵ See Chapters III and IV.

known as his "three magi," Percy was known as "the wizard Earl." His family, who were staunch Roman Catholics, had wanted him at one time to marry Arabella Stuart, but Percy, who was himself a Protestant, married the Earl of Essex's sister Dorothy. Percy was on good terms with Essex (though he did not have a high opinion of his character), but he found his wife an uncongenial partner. However, both Percy and his wife were courageous enough to protest vigorously to James I over his treatment of Sir Walter Raleigh. Such protests did nothing to improve Percy's own position, and he was treated with great harshness for his part in a plot in which he had no hand.

One prisoner in the *Salt Tower*, which is probably as old as William the Conqueror's massive White Tower, proved how dangerous it was to have any association with Bess of Hardwick. She herself was sent to the Tower for marrying her daughter Elizabeth to Charles Stuart; Charles's mother was sent to the Tower for the same reason. Bess's granddaughter Arabella Stuart was another prisoner—but the prisoner in the Salt Tower was sent there directly through Bess's accusation. In the days when she was still Lady St Loe, Bess and her husband accused one Hew Draper of witchcraft. As in the Beauchamp Tower, there are many inscriptions and names carved on the walls of the old Salt Tower. One of the carvings is the figure for casting horoscopes, an inscription adding that Hew Draper "made this spheer the 30 daye of Maye anno 1561."

Casting a horoscope was accounted as witchcraft unless it was casting the King's horoscope, when it amounted to treason. George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham, was once in trouble for "casting the King's nativity," as it was called, and during the time he was under the exciting but malign influence of Anna Maria Brudenell, Lady Shrewsbury, he was sent to the Tower no less than three times for offensive behaviour, being involved in brawls and challenges with five different people within the first nine months of their association.

The Tower was a great leveller—and certainly no respecter of persons.

Two other royal residences whose stories are interwoven with stories and characters we have already met are ST JAMES'S PALACE, so intimately associated with the Stuarts, and BUCKINGHAM PALACE. The present building replaces mansions connected with,

among others, Charles II's son Henry, Duke of Grafton,¹ with James II's daughter Catherine Sedley, and with Bess of Hardwick's gallant grandson William Cavendish, Duke of Devonshire.

Although ambassadors are still accredited "to the Court of St James," St James's Palace has not been a sovereign's residence since William IV's time. But it has known much history and seen much drama.

Henry VIII acquired the property for the Crown, and after pulling down the old leper hospital there, and draining the surrounding marshes, he had a manor built for himself and Anne Boleyn. Little of this old manor (probably designed by Holbein) remains to-day, except for the ground-floor plan of the building.

Henry's daughter "Bloody Mary" died in St James's while her sister was waiting in excited anticipation at HATFIELD HOUSE.^{2*} But most of the drama of the old building belongs to the Stuarts.

Charles I's adored elder brother, the handsome Prince Henry, died in St James's, though Raleigh sent him his own medicines from the Tower.

Charles too spent the last few days of his life there, leaving the Palace early one January morning to walk across the park to Whitehall for his execution in 1649. As his head fell people shook their heads. They had always known that both these sons of James I were doomed from babyhood.

Before Charles was six months old his Scottish nurse had seen a ghost spread a blood-stained cloak over the baby. And not two years later a laird at his father's Court saluted the small Charles, instead of his brother Henry, who was six years older. James remonstrated with the old man, but he had replied, "Nay, nay, sire. I know my future King. For this little Prince shall succeed you!"

The old laird was right, and when Charles defied superstition and chose white for his Coronation people remembered the old stories and the old prophecies, and they shook their heads, and repeated them all with the greatest relish.

When Charles married Henrietta Maria and brought her to London it was St James's Palace that she preferred to all the other royal residences, and here five of her eight children were born—Charles, Mary, James, Elizabeth, and Anne, who died when she was four. Henrietta, the youngest, whom her brother Charles

¹ See Chapter VI, under Euston.

² See Chapter V.

always loved so dearly, and whom he called "Minette," was born at Exeter.

When Charles I left London during the Civil War he took his two elder sons, Charles and James, with him. Cromwell sent the flaxen-haired Elizabeth and her plump younger brother Henry to St James's, and when James was captured he too was sent to the Palace. But he was taken in royal state, the townsfolk strewing the road with flowers and sweet-smelling herbs, and cheering the boy Prince along the way to imprisonment.

Henrietta, or "Minette," then a determined small girl scarcely out of babyhood, was also sent to St James's with her governess, Lady Dalkeith. After "Minette" and her household had been captured at Exeter, Charles I told Lady Dalkeith to stay with the baby at all costs, and this she did. She had not been long in the Palace, however, before she decided to escape with the little Princess and join the Queen, who was already in France. She had left England only fifteen days after the baby's birth.

Young "Minette" nearly upset her governess's plans.

Lady Dalkeith dressed herself in tatters, and, dressing the child as a little beggar-boy, she slipped out of the Palace with a manservant posing as her husband. They took the road to Dover. "Minette" had been told that her name for the time being was Peter, for that was the name that most resembled her own efforts to pronounce "Princess." But "Minette" was not a Stuart for nothing. She insisted at the top of her small voice that the rags were not hers, that her name was not Peter, and that she was a Princess. But passers-by and fellow-travellers at the inns merely smiled indulgently at the child, for she was obviously playing some private game of make believe. Lady Dalkeith's disguise was a masterpiece—so good that no one entertained the slightest suspicion about the three travellers. They reached Dover unmolested, crossed to France by ordinary packet-boat, and reached Paris in safety. Lady Dalkeith continued as "Minette's" governess, and the child grew up to be a great favourite with both the French and English Courts, for she was graceful, charming, vivacious, and affectionate.

"Minette" was the most constant love of her brother Charles's life, and he wrote to her constantly to tell her so. "I can never tell you too often," he wrote once, "how truly and passionately I love my dearest Minette."

"Minette" herself cared only for Charles's welfare and well-being. She prayed constantly and worked diligently to persuade

him to Roman Catholicism, a possibility he had already discussed with Father Huddleston when in hiding at MOSELEY^{1*} after his escape from Worcester. "Minette" was married to the jealous, vicious Philippe of Orleans, the French King's brother, but she had neither affection nor respect for him. He, on his part, was increasingly reluctant to allow "Minette" any life of her own, and it was with deep thankfulness that she received his permission to make a short visit to her brother in London.

Charles was so delighted at the prospect of seeing her again after their long separation that he sailed out into the Channel to welcome her, and balls, music, and all the festivities of the Court surrounded the young Duchess for the whole of her short holiday. She won her heart's desire, for Charles promised to declare himself a Roman Catholic, and to declare war on Holland in return for a subsidy from Louis. The agreement was signed in great secrecy by four English statesmen. One of them was Henry Bennet, Earl of Arlington, of EUSTON and ARLINGTON HOUSE—a forerunner of Buckingham Palace.

A few days later Charles sailed into mid-Channel again, this time to say good-bye to his dear "Minette." She quarrelled with Philippe immediately on her arrival in Paris. Within a week she was dead.

The Duchess, still only twenty-six, died after a night of agony, after drinking a cup of chicory water said to have been poisoned at the instigation of her husband. She cried all through the night that she had been poisoned, and all night too she spoke of the brother with whom she shared so deep a bond. "I have loved him better than life itself," she whispered to the Duke of Montagu, "and now my only regret in dying is to be leaving him."

"Minette" was buried with so many panegyrics that the Earl of Rochester, Comptroller of WOODSTOCK,² could not forbear to comment.

"Never," he declared, "never was anyone so regretted since dying was the fashion."

The Duke of Montagu³ who visited the dying "Minette" was the Ambassador to France, the man who divulged Charles's secret agreement with Louis in retaliation for the King's fury over his association with Barbara Castlemaine and her daughter Anne.

"Minette's" escape from St James's Palace was followed in 1647 by the infinitely more daring escape of her brother James,

¹ See Chapter VII.

² See Chapter VIII.

³ See Chapter II.

for he was only a boy of fifteen, and it was largely his own coolness that led to the success of the plan.

During 1646 King Charles was allowed to see his children from time to time, and he impressed on the fourteen-year-old Prince James that his life was possibly in danger, and that he must escape. And so began the young Prince's famous nightly games of hide-and-seek with Princess Elizabeth and little Prince Henry. James soon became so adept at hiding from the younger ones that sometimes they took as long as half an hour to find him. Then, one night, after the guards had grown accustomed to his nightly "disappearances" during these games, James locked up the little dog that followed him everywhere, slipped out into the garden, and, while the other children were searching high and low, he unlocked a side-door to which he had been given a duplicate key, and fled into St James's Park, where a Colonel Bamfield was waiting for him with a periwig and cloak. Bamfield too had played his cards well, for, though a Royalist at heart, in public he seemed an ardent Roundhead. Now he slipped the disguise on the young Prince, and James, kicking off his too obviously masculine shoes, ran through the Park to a waiting coach.

By this time his young sister and brother had grown anxious at not finding him, and they had asked the guards to help. So now the guards were searching the Palace for the boy who was playing hide-and-seek—and James was driving down the Strand to Ivy Lane, where he and Bamfield left the coach and hurried into the darkness. Here James's disguise was completed, and as he stepped on to a barge the young Prince had become a buxom girl.

By now the guards at the Palace had raised the alarm, and messengers were sent out hot-foot to warn all ships, and to watch every exit from London. But James managed to keep one jump ahead of them, though there was at least one dangerous moment. The barge-master, "peeping through a cranny in the door of the barge room, where a candle was burning before the Duke, perceived His Royal Highness laying his leg upon the table and plucking up his stockings in so unwomanish a manner" that his already aroused suspicions were confirmed. But he made no effort to betray the Prince, and loyally carried him down the river past Gravesend and transferred him to the ship for Holland.

A very different adventure befell two notorious women of the Court—the Duchess of Mazarin¹ and Mme de Beauclair, an old friend of James II. Once they had been rivals for Court favours,

¹ See Chapter VI, under Euston.

but now they had become friends, living in forgotten retirement at the Palace. One day the ladies made a pact that, whichever one of them died first, she would try to communicate with the other. It was the once fabulous Duchess of Mazarin who died first. Mme de Beauclair waited patiently for some sign—then impatiently—but she believed in the Duchess of Mazarin's promise sufficiently to argue heatedly about the matter to a friend.

A few months later the friend was summoned to the Palace, but, not being well, she hesitated to go. Mme de Beauclair sent for her again, this time with pressing entreaties backed by the gift of a jewel-case and jewels. The friend consented to go. She found the Frenchwoman apparently well, but she was convinced that within a few hours she would be dead. The Duchess of Mazarin had appeared to her, she said, "seeming rather to swim than walk," and said, "Beauclair, between the hours of twelve and one to-night, you will be with me!"

By then it was almost twelve o'clock. As the hour struck, Mme de Beauclair cried, "Oh! I am sick at heart!" and died there and then.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE stands on land that saw the beginning—and the end—of a royal excursion into industry. It succeeds mansions which housed nobility and semi-royalty, and which witnessed all the splendour and intrigue which followed in the wake of those who sought kings' favours.

The royal excursion into industry was James I's attempt to found the silk industry in England. The Stuarts never had enough money, and James's imagination and desires had been fired by the French King Henry IV's great success in the same field. James wrote to several Lord-Lieutenants of the Shires to say that he wished to emulate "our brother, the French King [who] hath, since his coming to that crowne, both begunne and brought to perfection the making of silkes in his country . . . whereby he hath wonne to himself honour, and to his subjects a mervailous increase of wealth."

The silk trade had spread from Italy to France, and by about 1550 silkworms were established at various French cities, including Touraine, Avignon, Paris, and Lyons. After the destruction of Antwerp by the Spaniards in 1585, when the weavers fled to England, James had hopes of establishing a flourishing silk industry here. He had visions of new wealth flowing into the royal coffers, for enormous sums were spent on the Continent every year for the purchase of silks. There was certainly a great demand.

The King gave instructions that mulberry-seeds and young trees were to be imported and planted in four acres of land near what is now Constitution Hill. It was an excellent idea, and mulberry-seeds and young trees were duly imported, but for some reason—perhaps from ignorance—the wrong type of trees was introduced. Instead of importing white mulberries (which silkworms like), the King's agents imported black mulberries (which they abhor).

So in the course of time the Mulberry Gardens lapsed. During the Commonwealth they became a public park, and under Charles II they became a bawdy and rakish meeting-place for gallants and libertines. The silkworm houses became luxurious eating-places, and the gardens themselves, with their seductively contrived arbours, became notorious for lovers' meetings, plottings, flirtations, and scandals. Some of them grew into gambling dens, where hazard, gleck, and other games of chance were played with all their attendant excitement—and challenges. In fact, if the Gardens were wicked they were vastly popular, and there must have been general regret—at least by those who frequented them—when they were finally closed.

There have been several houses built on the old site of the Mulberry Gardens. Some were burnt down, some pulled down and rebuilt, but the honour of building the first house there belongs to George Goring, by that time Baron Goring, Master of the Queen's Household to Charles I's Queen Henrietta Maria. That was in 1630.

Goring was a staunch Royalist. He had frequented three Courts—Elizabeth's, James I's, and Charles I's—and he was one of the gay, capable, witty, often foolish, and adventurous men typical of the courtiers of the day. It was typical of him that when he was besieged in Colchester during the Civil War, by Sir Thomas Fairfax, he and other leaders, after a stubborn resistance, offered to give themselves up if their men were allowed to go free. The offer was accepted, and Goring was imprisoned in Windsor Castle.

After the defeat of the Royalists Goring went to the Continent, and he died while commanding some English troops serving in Spain. During the Commonwealth, Goring House was used as a barracks and stable, and it was finally burnt down.

When the Gardens were closed in 1675 Charles II gave the property to Henry Bennet, Earl of Arlington, of EUSTON.¹

Arlington was another typical courtier, but cast in a bigger

¹ See Chapter VI.

mould than Goring. He was ambitious, rich, a great lover of intrigue, and jealous to the core of the second Duke of Buckingham (no relation to the man who gave his name to the Palace).

Arlington rebuilt Goring House, and changed its name to Arlington House. He lavished a fortune on the building, creating a house of magnificence and elegance both inside and out. He collected rare pictures and beautiful furniture—and is said to have been the first man to bring tea into England. He brought a pound back with him from Holland in 1665.

Arlington never achieved any particular influence over the King, but his ambition and his friendship with Charles did give the house on Mulberry Gardens their first royal—or semi-royal—owner, for his little daughter Isabella married Henry, Duke of Grafton, one of the King's sons by Barbara Castlemaine.

By the time the young Duchess of Grafton had borne a son, in 1683, Arlington was becoming an old man, and he died two years later, leaving all his magnificence to his young daughter and her family. But not many years later the Duke of Grafton was killed at the Siege of Cork. Arlington House was too big for the Duchess and her small boy, and she leased it to William Cavendish, Duke of Devonshire, grandson of the remarkable Bess of Hardwick. (This William Cavendish had a cousin, another William Cavendish, who became first Duke of Newcastle.¹)

Like his predecessors, Goring and Arlington, Devonshire was larger, livelier, more robustly colourful than the usual run of men. He was a noted swordsman, and became famous for his abortive duel on the stage of the Grand Opera House in Paris. When three officers of the Guard insulted him he immediately challenged them all to a duel, and offered to fight them simultaneously. To save him from an uneven fight, some one threw him into the pit, where he landed so heavily that he carried the scars to his dying day.

Later Devonshire was responsible for bringing to justice the three men sent by Charles von Königsmarck to murder Sir Thomas Thynne, of LONGLEAT.^{2*} Königsmarck himself was acquitted by a bribed court. Devonshire, characteristically challenged him to a duel, and offered to meet him in France. Königsmarck, however, declined to accept the challenge.

The following year Devonshire appeared for the defence at the trial of his friend, Lord William Russell, of BEDFORD HOUSE,³ and when he was found guilty offered to change clothes with him to give him a chance to escape.

¹ See Chapter V, under Welbeck Abbey. ² See Chapter II. ³ See Chapter VI.

Devonshire was a romantic. He lived largely and lavishly, and was lavish in all he did. He gambled heavily, gave generously to charities, loved horse-racing, cock-fighting, masked balls, and all the gaiety and excitement and danger of Court life. But he was only a tenant of Arlington House, and it is probable that before he died the Duchess of Grafton had sold it to another Buckingham.

This Duke of Buckingham was John Sheffield—no relation whatsoever to the two George Villiers, father and son, who had been the Dukes of Buckingham at the Courts of James I, Charles I, and Charles II.

John Sheffield had been a precocious boy. Before he was twelve he had outgrown (or worn out) his tutors, and undertaken his own education. He grew into a versatile, courageous courtier, a swash-buckler and philanderer, with a taste in women which he admitted was neither abstemious nor discriminating. He showed great courage in battle against the Dutch, but he came under a serious cloud when it was discovered that he was having an *affaire* with Princess (later Queen) Anne. As a punishment he was sent to relieve Tangiers in a leaky ship which his enemies at Court profoundly hoped would founder. But he accomplished the task with great success, and returned to all his favouritism at Court.

Under James II, Sheffield became Lord Chamberlain, and though he retired from public life under William and Mary, Anne remembered her erstwhile lover, and after she came to the throne he flourished once again. She created him Duke of Buckingham, and shortly afterwards he introduced another royal link with the former Arlington House, now called Buckingham House. For his third wife Buckingham married Catherine Sedley, an illegitimate daughter of James II by the Catherine Sedley whom he created Duchess of Dorchester. Catherine Sedley the mother was an amusing woman, and much loved by James. She supplanted Arabella Churchill¹ in James's affections, but she said, "It cannot be for my beauty, because I haven't any, and it cannot be for my wit, because he hasn't enough to know that I have any." John Evelyn called her "none of the most virtuous but a wit," and she always had a kind of salty humour that reminded people of Nell Gwynn.

On the accession of William III, Catherine Sedley accidentally met William's mistress,* Elizabeth Villiers (who later lived at CLIVEDEN^{2*}), and Louise de K  roualle, Duchess of Portsmouth, Charles II's former mistress, and by then a very old lady.

Catherine Sedley looked at them with a twinkle, and said, with

¹ See Chapter VIII.

² See Chapter I.

characteristic candour and sting, "Fancy we three —— meeting like this!"

Catherine Sedley the daughter was, of course, a half-sister of Queen Anne. When she married Buckingham, Anne gave him a grant of land from St James's Park, and he made Buckingham House into one of the greatest mansions in the country.

The Duchess of Buckingham took her royal blood very seriously. The Duke himself retired when the divorced George I, whom he did not like, came to the throne, and the Duchess behaved as though she were the Queen of England. Her semi-royal parentage filled her with immense pride, and after her husband's death Buckingham House became a hotbed of Jacobite intrigue. The Duchess always insisted on being treated like royalty, with servants and friends bowing themselves out of her presence.

But it all availed the poor Duchess nothing. Her only son died young, and the property passed to an illegitimate son of her husband's, Charles Herbert, on condition that he took the name of Sheffield. But Charles Sheffield, like the young Duchess of Grafton before him, found the huge house too big for a moderate pocket, and he sold the once royal property back again to royalty.

It was George III who bought Buckingham House, in 1762, and he gave it to Queen Charlotte as part of her dowry. He built the great library and the vast riding-school, redecorated the interior, and at a house-warming created a delightful sensation by hanging 4000 glass lamps in the garden.

Buckingham House did not become Buckingham Palace till 1837. George IV employed Nash to rebuild the old house in a style suitable for a king. Nash spent half a million on it, but George died before the work was finished. His brother William did not live there either, and it was not until it had been redecorated once again that Queen Victoria drove there in state in July 1837, and Buckingham House became Buckingham Palace.

Since Queen Victoria's day Buckingham Palace, with its 600 rooms and its forty-five acres of lovely gardens, has become the symbolic "heart" of the Commonwealth of Nations.

It is by no means a stagnant or tradition-bound heart. It is a heart that moves with the times, for the one old, surviving mulberry-tree that saw the birth and death of James I's adventure into industry now looks across the lawns and sees a helicopter land—and a Queen's husband at the controls.

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